

Dragged Across Concrete

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INT. ROOM 145 - PLEASANT LODGINGS MOTOR HOTEL - NIGHT

A rented bed SQUEAKS. Amber light colors a small motel room in which a nude, dark-skinned Puerto Rican woman of twenty-eight who is named LANA tightens her arms and legs around HENRY JOHNS, an unclothed, slim black fellow of the same age who has close-cropped hair and sleepy eyes. Sweat drips down the scars that mark his face and neck as he presses deeper into his partner.

The speed of the sexual rhythm increases, and extended eyelashes flutter. A loud GROAN rises from the woman's fuchsia lips, and the slim fellow hastens the tempo, which soon becomes urgent. Hands run along limbs and breasts and buttocks and ball up into fists.

An electric spasm shoots through Henry Johns, and he arches his back, straining pleurably.

The orgasm passes, and sense returns to the spent, slim fellow, who then reaches down, withdraws himself, and rolls onto his back. His right hand flings a filled condom into the waste basket.

Henry Johns and Lana find pillows, lie side by side, and look at the ceiling fan, which spins overhead in a slow circuit.

HENRY JOHNS

I liked you back when we was in elementary. In Mr. Lorenzo's class.

LANA

I liked you too.

HENRY JOHNS

Wish I knew that...though I woulda needed a instruction manual back then.

(he glances at her)

How long you been doin' this?

Eyes on the ceiling fan, Lana thinks and shrugs.

LANA

Year. Maybe a little longer. Biscuit saw me a coupla times before he set this up for you.

HENRY JOHNS

Biscuit's my closest since forever.

LANA

He's nice. Politer than most men.

HENRY JOHNS

You ever try somethin' else? Some other kind of work?

LANA
 Not real serious or anything...
 I worked at the mall for a little
 while.

Ruminating, the woman pulls up a blanket. The slim fellow
 gently takes her wrists and shakes his head, 'no'.

HENRY JOHNS
 Lemme look, if you don't mind.
 I had a long intermission.

LANA
 Okay.

Lana releases the blanket, and Henry Johns caresses her hair,
 back, and buttocks with very gentle fingertips.

EXT. COURTYARD / PROJECT APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Headlights glimmer on discarded beer cans and condom wrappers
 as a dark green sedan with tinted windows sidles to the curb
 of a twenty-story apartment building that is one of many in
 this low-income housing area. Within the abutting courtyard
 and seated upon a stone bench are two BLACK TEENAGERS who eye
 the PURRING vehicle. One of the duo extinguishes a secret
 smokable while nearby, a PLUMP HISPANIC WOMAN who wears a
 bathrobe, socks, and flip-flops raises her gaze from the
 shivering chihuahua that cowers at the end of a pink leash.

From the passenger seat of the vehicle emerges Henry Johns,
 dressed in jeans and a hoodie. His left hand snags a navy
 backpack from within the vehicle, and he nods appreciatively
 to the man who sits behind the wheel--BISCUIT, a stout and
 goateed black fellow of the same age.

BISCUIT
 I'm talking with Andre on Tuesday.
 Are you interested if something
 comes up?

Henry Johns contemplates the offer and slings the backpack
 over his shoulder.

HENRY JOHNS
 Before I consider that kinda
 vocation, I need to get myself
 acclimated.

BISCUIT
 Certainly. Walk around. Breathe
 some air. Gaze at the sky and see
 how blue it looks on the outside.
 Enjoy yourself.

HENRY JOHNS
 Once I've settled, I'll let you
 know.

(MORE)

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Anyhow, thanks for settin' that up
with Lana and for fetchin' me.

Biscuit scratches his left ear and nods.

BISCUIT
Certainly.

HENRY JOHNS
See you.

Henry Johns shuts the door and sees in the tinted glass window the reflection of a red rectangle. The green sedan departs as he turns around, faces the apartment building, and eyes the ninth floor, where lies a window that glows deep red. Behind layers of sheer curtains, two dark figures move.

Anger clouds the face of Henry Johns, who currently strides toward the entrance of the building. From an outer pocket of his backpack he withdraws a CRINKLING baggie, which he then opens. Metal JINGLES as he plucks a set of keys from the clear plastic.

INT. DEN & LIVING ROOM / APARTMENT 921 - MOMENTS LATER

Bolts SNAP, and a door opens. Henry Johns walks into a living room where pizza boxes, Chinese food containers, and tabloid papers lie upon stained, mismatched furnishings. The sight of this messy interior does not better the slim fellow's mood. Smelling something in the air, he shakes his head, shuts the door, and SNAPS the bolts.

A woman MOANS.

Simmering with anger, Henry Johns looks to his left, where stands a closed bedroom door. At the bottom edge of this panel glows the deep red light that he noticed earlier from the courtyard. His eyes then flicker to the right. There lies another shut door.

Again, the woman MOANS. Henry Johns returns his attention to the room on his left, from which this sound emanates. Grimly, he sets down his backpack, kneels, reaches under the sofa, and roots around in the darkness. Things CLANK and refuse CRINKLES as he searches. Again, the woman MOANS.

The slim fellow withdraws his arm. Beer cans, a bong, and two crumpled comic books spill out as he unearths a metal baseball bat.

Something THUDS as Henry Johns walks toward the door that is to his left. An unseen bed CREAKS, and again, the woman MOANS. Following this is a deep male GRUNT.

With a tightly clenched left fist, Henry Johns POUNDS the closed door. The CREAKING sounds within the room stop.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(quietly)
Hold on.
(loudly)
Ethan. Go back to your room, okay?
Mama's busy-

HENRY JOHNS
This ain't Ethan.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Henry?

HENRY JOHNS
Yeah. Put on some clothes and-

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I've got company right now, I can't-

Henry Johns POUNDS the door with his fist and tightens his grip on the baseball bat. Fury smolders in his eyes.

HENRY JOHNS
Put on some clothes and eject that
nigga or I'm gonna practice home
runs on his skull.

The MURMUR of unintelligible conversation buzzes on the far side of the door.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Move like you're in fast forward.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
You ain't got no-

Henry Johns SMACKS the baseball bat against the door, and the unseen woman YELPS.

HENRY JOHNS
That was a baseball bat. And this
door's beyond flimsy.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Okay, okay. Let us get ourselves
dressed. Damn!

Quick FOOTFALLS and quiet WHISPERS sound within the bedroom. Waiting, Henry Johns glances across the messy area. A light shines beneath the other door.

More FOOTFALLS sound within the near room, and the slim fellow steps aside. The door opens and reveals JENNIFER, a voluptuous black woman of forty-two years who has blond hair, gold makeup, and a matching kimono. Marijuana smoke that has been painted red by a colored lampshade wafts out into the living room.

JENNIFER

Before I send my friend out, you
gotta promise me you won't hurt h-

Henry Johns swings the baseball bat, which SMACKS the door. Jennifer YELPS as the panel flies all the way open. In the far corner of the plush bedroom stands an anxious and sweating BALD WHITE MAN of fifty-two whose business suit sloppily drapes his cringing anatomy.

The slim fellow extends the baseball bat and points its tip at the front door.

HENRY JOHNS

Out.

The Bald White Man hastens past Jennifer and lowers his gaze as he passes Henry Johns. On the far side of the living room, the visitor SNAPS the bolts and seizes the brass doorknob.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

Call my mother again, and I'll
crack your skull. Understan'?

BALD WHITE MAN

I do.

HENRY JOHNS

Aight. And take those garbage bags
that're outside down to the trash.

BALD WHITE MAN

Okay. I will.

The Bald White Man exits the apartment and closes the door.

Henry Johns sets the baseball bat on the sofa, walks to the entrance, SNAPS the bolts, calms himself, and faces Jennifer, who is shaking her head in disbelief.

JENNIFER

You just cost me--

HENRY JOHNS

Ma. How long you been doin' this?

JENNIFER

Not long.

The slim fellow doubtfully appraises his mother.

HENRY JOHNS

What about your job at the grocery?

JENNIFER

I got fired, and we needed money--
me and Ethan did.

Henry Johns glances at the closed door that stands to his right and then scrutinizes Jennifer.

HENRY JOHNS
I left you money before I went in.
Plenty for twice as long.

JENNIFER
It ran out.

HENRY JOHNS
Yeah. And I can see it's footprints
up and down your arms.

Jennifer glances at her needle-marked arms, tightens her robe, and hugs herself so that the discolorations are no longer showing. Embarrassment and anger color her face.

JENNIFER
You got no right lecturin' me 'bout
nothin'. You were in jail, I did
what-

HENRY JOHNS
Ma...let's fast forward all this--
there's no point arguing 'bout a
bunch of yesterdays.
(he rubs his jaw)
You can't be doin' this. Hookin'.
Needles. And especially not around
Ethan at all ever. He ain't a
toddler no more, and you doin'
those things 'round him will mess
him up permanent.

JENNIFER
So then you're gonna take care of
me and him? Like your cocksucking
father did when he ran off with his
faggot ass boyfriend?

Henry Johns clenches his fists. For an uncomfortable moment, the mother and son glare at each other.

HENRY JOHNS
Pops is a yesterday who ain't worth
words. I'll figure things.

JENNIFER
You've got opportunities? Right
outta the penitentiary?

HENRY JOHNS
I might.

Jennifer thinks about things, lowers her gaze, and adjusts the belt of her robe.

JENNIFER
Well...we're six months behind on
bills--rent and everything.

Henry Johns SNORTS derisively, though is not surprised by this information.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
And the collection agencies are
buzzin' like mosquitoes.

HENRY JOHNS
Aight. Start organizin' yourself--
and this place--and I'll figure
things.
(he gestures to his right)
Ethan's home?

Ashamed, Jennifer nods her head, 'yes'.

Henry suppresses a verbal condemnation, turns away, and walks toward the closed door. There, he pauses, raises a fist, and gently KNOCKS upon the panel.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Ethan...?

JENNIFER
You gotta knock loud. I told him to
wear his headphones...since I was
havin' company.

The slim fellow KNOCKS more forcefully.

ETHAN (O.S.)
What?

HENRY JOHNS
It's me.

ETHAN (O.S.)
Henry! When'd you get out of the
oven?

HENRY JOHNS
Today. Can I come in?

ETHAN (O.S.)
I've gotta get the door. Ma told me
to lock it because a man was coming
over.

Henry Johns glares at Jennifer, who then turns away and starts gathering trash.

ETHAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm coming.

A SQUEAKING sound emanates from the unseen room.

HENRY JOHNS
Sounds like you could use some oil.
(to Jennifer)
(MORE)

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Ma. You got any? Some kind that
smells good?

Jennifer sets a pizza box in a trash bag.

JENNIFER
I got the Italian kind that's got a
cork in it.

HENRY JOHNS
That'll work.

The knob to the closed door waggles, and there is a CLICK. At present, the panel swings wide and reveals ETHAN, a fourteen year-old boy who has a lighter complexion than his brother, but a similar face and the same close-cropped hair. His lean body is neatly folded into a wheelchair.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Looks like you been workin' out.

ETHAN
I've been doing curls.

Grinning, the brothers perform an elaborate handshake, lean forward, and hug.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Missed you, Henry.

HENRY JOHNS
(quietly)
Yeah, bro. Me too.

Henry Johns stands upright and clears his throat while in the kitchenette, Jennifer raises a dark green bottle of extra virgin olive oil.

JENNIFER
You want this now?

HENRY JOHNS
Just put it on the counter with a
rag--I'll take care of it when
Ethan goes to sleep.

The mother sets the bottle down, and the slim fellow looks at his younger brother.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
You wanna show me those video games
you talked about in your letters?

ETHAN
Yeah. You're gonna stay here?

HENRY JOHNS
I am. 'Til things're sorted
correct.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE / SKYCRAPER - NIGHT

A handsome white male EXECUTIVE of forty-three years who wears a wrinkled suit stands in the quiet darkness of his lavish office. His worried head leans against a big picture window, and the tiny street lights that lie thirty stories below sparkle in his red eyes. The preoccupied fellow takes a deep breath and glances at the conference phone that sits upon his vast oaken desk. A moment later, he EXHALES.

FEMALE VOICE FROM SPEAKER PHONE
Was that an answer?

EXECUTIVE
Sell off everything that's
anything. I want out of this
market.

FEMALE VOICE FROM SPEAKER PHONE
What form do you want it in? Cash?

EXECUTIVE
No. Nothing that's tethered to our
fragile economy. Something that's
more permanent than paper.

The Executive eyes a golden pen that sits upon his desk and then ruminates.

FEMALE VOICE FROM SPEAKER PHONE
Sir?

EXECUTIVE
Bullion. Gold bullion.

FEMALE VOICE FROM SPEAKER PHONE
All of it?

EXECUTIVE
Yes. Keep it in the vault at North
Bulwark so that I'll have easy
access when I leave the country.

Titlecard: Three weeks later...

EXT. FIFTH FLOOR FIRE ESCAPE / EIGHT STORY BUILDING - DAWN

Crouching in the shadows on the fifth floor fire escape of a condominium building is BRETT RIDGEMAN, a big, well-built fellow of fifty-nine years who wears a navy windbreaker, brown corduroys, and weathered work boots. Above his grimly set mouth are a neat mustache, a crooked nose, hazel eyes, and crewcut, silver-blond hair. His unzipped jacket admits access to the semiautomatic gun that is nestled in his shoulder holster.

Rarely blinking, the grim fellow monitors an apartment window that lies five feet away and to his right. On the far side of this glass are closed venetian blinds.

The fire escape vibrates, and Ridgeman clasps his pistol, pivots, and looks directly down through the latticework. A dark FIGURE moves through the narrow spaces, reaches a set of stairs, and climbs. Quiet FOOTFALLS gently shake the metal.

At present, Ridgeman discerns a hunk of the climber, releases his gun, and relaxes against the wall. His eyes return to the closed venetian blinds of the fifth floor window.

The fire escape vibrates with each quiet FOOTFALL, and a cigarette butt creeps closer to the edge of a rail. This stub leaps to its death as the climber rises from the fourth landing and garners a glance from Ridgeman.

Ascending the steps is ANTHONY LURASETTI, a tan, trim, fit fellow from New York who has slicked back black hair, sharp features, and thirty-six years.

Ridgeman appraises Anthony's hands and wrinkles his mouth.

RIDGEMAN
Where's mine?

ANTHONY
Spilled.

(All dialogue on the fire escape is quietly uttered.)

RIDGEMAN
You didn't think to go back and get another?

ANTHONY
You accelerated the event. There was little time and less inclination.

RIDGEMAN
Prick.

Anthony opens his coat so that his right hand has access to the holstered semiautomatic that lies beneath his left armpit. Gripping the rail, the New Yorker sits down.

ANTHONY
I thought you'd be okay with me just telling you about mine.

RIDGEMAN
Nope.

ANTHONY
This story begins in the fields of Jamaica, where-

RIDGEMAN

Hush.

A plane passes as the duo eyes the nearby window.

ANTHONY

Davids is gonna do 'Leaky Pipes'?

RIDGEMAN

It usually works.

Anthony withdraws a green pack of gum and slides out a stick, which he then unwraps, slots into his mouth, and chews.

ANTHONY

You still maintain that "gum is for cows and imbeciles"?

RIDGEMAN

I am, and it is.

The New Yorker replaces the package as two cellular phones BUZZ. The partners glance at these devices, read text messages, and refill their pockets.

Ridgeman points at the stairs that lead upward. Anthony hastens past the window, climbs to the sixth level, kneels, withdraws his gun, and lets his police badge dangle from his neck chain. On the fifth level, the grim fellow crouches beside the window, puts his shoulder to the brick, exposes his brass identification, and raises his semiautomatic.

From the apartment comes the muted sound of somebody KNOCKING on the front door. This is followed by a moment of silence. At present, the KNOCKING resumes.

GROGGY VOICE (O.S.)

Shit man, go away. I'm sleeping.

MUTED VOICE (O.S.)

Sorry to bother you Mr. Vasquez, but there's a leak coming from your apartment. I need come in and check the pipes.

Quiet FOOTFALLS sounds within the apartment. From their positions on the fifth and sixth landings, Ridgeman and Anthony look over the barrels of their guns at the window.

VASQUEZ (O.S.)

I don't see any leaks.

MUTED VOICE (O.S.)

The super hired me to check the pipes. Let me in, and I'll take care of this quick as I can.

Weapons raised, Ridgeman and Anthony watch and wait. The silence from within the apartment starts to become suspicious. In a far-off place, a dog BARKS.

Something catches Ridgeman's eye, and he looks at the building that stands on the other side of the alleyway. Light shines in one of the distant seventh floor apartments. At present, he returns his attention to the nearby window.

MUTED VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(louder)
Mr. Vasquez...? Sir...?

The silence becomes ominous. Ridgeman glances up through the grating at Anthony and nods meaningfully. At present, the partners return their gazes to the window.

On the far side of the glass, the venetian blinds waver. Ridgeman presses himself flat against the nearby wall.

An index finger slides between two flexible plastic slats and pulls them apart. Two anxious, bloodshot eyes appear in this opening and scan the seemingly vacant fire escape.

Ridgeman glances at the building across the way. A silhouetted FIGURE stands in the illuminated seventh floor window. This person does not move.

Loud KNOCKS sound within the nearby apartment.

MUTED VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(loudly)
Sir? I need to get in there and
check those pipes.

Bloodshot eyes and the prying index finger disappear from the venetian blinds, which then SNAP shut.

Ridgeman looks across the alley at the Figure who stands in the illuminated seventh floor window. This watcher disappears, and the light goes out.

A metal latch CLICKS. Venetian blinds RATTLE and rise behind the fifth floor window. Flat against the wall and gun upheld, Ridgeman awaits the fleeing suspect. Anthony points his weapon from an unobstructed vantage on the upper landing.

MUTED VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mr. Vasquez?

VASQUEZ (O.S.)
I'm getting dressed.

The window slides up. Two thick hands land on the sill and precipitate VASQUEZ, a big Mexican American of forty years who has a goatee, a mullet hair cut, and a bull skull tattoo on his neck. Climbing out, the fellow looks to his right.

Ridgeman surges from the other direction and jams his semiautomatic into Vasquez's nape.

RIDGEMAN
Police. Don't move.

Frightened, the suspect withdraws into his apartment.

Ridgeman grabs the collar of Vasquez's jacket and yanks him forward. Off-balance, the Mexican American SLAMS onto the fire escape, where his forehead CLANKS against iron.

Gun upraised, Anthony storms down the steps and toward the open window. Beyond the muzzle of his semiautomatic lies a seemingly empty living room.

Prostrated on the grille, Vasquez moves his right hand toward his jacket pocket. Ridgeman kicks the extremity away and steps on the back of the prone man's skull. A nose slips between two iron slats.

VASQUEZ

Fuck, man. Take it-

RIDGEMAN

Don't move your hands again, comprende?

VASQUEZ

Yeah.

RIDGEMAN

Anthony.

Satisfied that no immediate threat lies within the apartment, Anthony turns from the window, kneels, and reaches into Vasquez's pockets. From the prone man's jacket he withdraws a revolver, a multipurpose tool, and a baseball that has been autographed. These items he pockets. At present, the New Yorker draws the suspect's arms behind his back, SNAPS on a pair of stainless steel handcuffs, and ratchets them tight.

VASQUEZ

Okay man, okay--get your foot off my head.

Ridgeman presses twenty more pounds of force into the boot that rests upon Vasquez's skull.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

Hey m-

RIDGEMAN

Anybody else inside?

VASQUEZ

Mi novia. In the bedroom. Just her.

RIDGEMAN

She's got a weapon in there? This wonderful woman you were abandoning?

VASQUEZ

No.

RIDGEMAN
What's her name?

ANTHONY
If you happen to recall.

VASQUEZ
Take your foot off my head right-

Ridgeman shifts the angle of his leg. Vasquez's head turns, and his wedged nose SNAPS.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
Fuck!

Blood drips from the broken proboscis onto the leaves of a potted plant that decorates the fourth floor landing.

Anthony turns from the window, appraises Vasquez, and looks at Ridgeman.

ANTHONY
There's something on your boot.

RIDGEMAN
I noticed.
(to Vasquez)
What's her name?

VASQUEZ
Rosalinda.

RIDGEMAN
That sounds like two names.

ANTHONY
At least.

VASQUEZ
It's one.

RIDGEMAN
You're completely sure there's just one woman in there?

VASQUEZ
Yeah man, there's only one.

Gun upraised, Anthony walks over to the window, examines the empty living room, and eyes a closed bedroom door.

ANTHONY
(calling out)
Rosalinda? This's the Bulwark
Police. You need to open that door
and come out with your hands up.

Shouted directives ECHO throughout the apartment, but elicit no response.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Rosalinda? Are you in there?

The inquiry ECHOES. Irrked, Ridgeman eyes the head that is stuck to his boot.

RIDGEMAN
Rosalinda speaks English?

VASQUEZ
Yeah, but she's got a problem with her ears.

Skeptical wrinkles appear on the forehead of the grim fellow.

RIDGEMAN
She's deaf?

VASQUEZ
Not all the way--and she's got a thing she wears so she can hear better, but not when she goes to sleep.

RIDGEMAN
You look like a snorer.

VASQUEZ
Sleep apnea.

Monitoring the interior, Anthony sees nothing of note.

RIDGEMAN
Does she have any firearms?

VASQUEZ
No gun, but she's got pepper spray in her purse.

A look of doubt plays upon the face of Ridgeman, who then nods his head at the open window, removes his boot from Vasquez, and kneels.

RIDGEMAN
This'll be snug.

The grim fellow withdraws a pair of handcuffs, jams one bracelet around the suspect's thick left ankle, and affixes the other to the railing, where it CLANKS. The skin around the steel clasp turns white.

VASQUEZ
That's cutting off my circulation, man. You can't-

RIDGEMAN
We'll be back before your foot turns blue.

ANTHONY

Probably.

Anthony ducks his head and climbs through the open window.
Ridgeman follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM / VASQUEZ'S CONDO - SAME

Black leather couches, two plush recliners, a gigantic television, four oversized speakers, a cylindrical sub-woofer, a framed painting of The Last Supper, and an ajar display case that is filled with autographed baseballs furnish the living room of Vasquez's condominium. Across a white shag carpet, Ridgeman and Anthony carry their upraised guns. Four alert police eyeballs flicker in varied directions and systematically return to the closed bedroom door.

ANTHONY

A lot nicer than my place.
(he SNIFFS)
Even the smell.

RIDGEMAN

Admit Davids.

Anthony walks to the entrance as Ridgeman circumvents the sofa and reaches the bedroom door.

ANTHONY

Officer?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Detective?

Anthony unlocks the bolt and opens the door for REGINALD DAVIDS, a mustached black man of thirty who wears a windbreaker over khaki overalls and holds a toolbox.

ANTHONY

You dove deep on this plumber thing.

DAVIDS

I've got a cousin who plumbs.

Davids enters, shuts the door, SNAPS a bolt, and looks at Ridgeman, who stands beside the closed bedroom.

DAVIDS (CONT'D)

Vasquez is shackled?

RIDGEMAN

On the fire escape. His deaf girlfriend's in here.

DAVIDS

Seriously?
(he eyes the armed duo)
You guys gonna shoot her?

Ridgeman shrugs as Anthony stages himself on the opposite side of the bedroom door.

DAVIDS (CONT'D)
She's got a gun?

RIDGEMAN
Seventy-five percent chance.

DAVIDS
Where do you want me?

RIDGEMAN
Window.

Dauids walks across the shag to the open window, looks outside at Vasquez, and grins sardonically.

DAVIDS
Shoulda let the plumber in.

Ridgeman and Anthony eye each other and nod. Fluidly, the grim fellow seizes the knob, turns his hand, and shoves the panel. The flung door swings wide.

A woman YELPS. Springing from the bed is ROSALINDA, a nineteen year-old Columbian girl who wears nothing but a red thong. Her feet SLAP against the tiles as she snatches her purse and races toward another door.

INT. BEDROOM / VASQUEZ'S CONDO - SAME

Ridgeman bolts directly at Rosalinda. Scared, the Columbian girl leaps into the bathroom, spins, and flings the door. A raised boot KICKS the panel in the opposite direction.

INT. BATHROOM / VASQUEZ'S CONDO - SAME

YELPING, Rosalinda scrambles backward into the shower. Ridgeman speeds into the gray marble bathroom and sees the cornered suspect.

The Columbian girl frantically reaches into her purse, which the grim fellow snatches from her grasp and tosses outside.

Rosalinda cowers as Ridgeman raises his police badge and displays (but does not point) his gun.

RIDGEMAN
(over-enunciating the
words)
Police. Hold still.

Confused and breathing hard, the Columbian girl eyes brass, steel, and the grim fellow.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Comprendes? Si o no?

Rosalinda nods her head, 'yes'. Ridgeman looks into the adjacent room at Anthony, who stands near the bed. The tossed purse lies upon a blanket in front of the New Yorker.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
(calling to Anthony)
That purse felt heavy.

ANTHONY
Even taking into account the amount
of makeup Latinas carry?

RIDGEMAN
Even still.

Anthony reaches for the discarded purse as Ridgeman snatches a black bathrobe from the wall. Things CLATTER as the New Yorker dumps the myriad contents of the bag onto the bed. Metal flashes amidst the array.

ANTHONY
She's got a gun.

Irked, Ridgeman balls up the bathrobe and tosses it into the toilet. His other hand reaches toward the wall and twists the 'C' knob. Cold water HISSES from the shower nozzle onto Rosalinda, who YELPS and steps out of the spray. At present, the grim fellow takes her right arm and escorts her through the doorway. Bare feet SLAPS tiles.

INT. BEDROOM / VASQUEZ'S CONDO - SAME

Returning to the bedroom, Ridgeman steps in front of Rosalinda, who is now wet and shivering. Anthony empties bullets from the woman's revolver onto the bed and then drops the unloaded gun amidst no less than fifteen containers of makeup and a Spanish tabloid magazine that displays the before and after photos of a female celebrity who lost 200 pounds 'en tres dias!'

ANTHONY
I'm doubting the veracity of that
lead story.

RIDGEMAN
Shut the door and crank the fans.

Anthony closes the bedroom door, thumbs the lock, and dials the ceiling fans to the highest setting. Ridgeman monitors Rosalinda, who covers her bare breasts with her arms while shivering. Spinning blades WHIRR overhead.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
(over-enunciating)
Where did your novio put that green
duffel bag that he got last night?

ROSALINDA
(slight Columbian accent
and mildly slurred)
Can I have something to wear? I'm
cold.

RIDGEMAN
I didn't understand that.
(to Anthony)
Did you?

ANTHONY
Nope. Sounded kinda like dolphin.

Ridgeman nods and once again eyes Rosalinda.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
I expect she'll be more
intelligible when she answers our
questions.

RIDGEMAN
Where's the green duffel bag?

ROSALINDA
I wanna call a lawyer.

Ridgeman wrinkles his forehead, feigning confusion, and looks
at Anthony.

ANTHONY
I wanna...chitter chitter.

The grim fellow returns his attention to the Colombian girl
and leans in close.

RIDGEMAN
Where is the green duffel bag?

Ruminating, Rosalinda looks away from Ridgeman. Goosebumps
bead upon her wet skin, and her teeth CHATTER.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
We saw Vasquez bring it here last
night at eleven. That swell guy who
fled and left you here with us.

ANTHONY
But at least he had time to get his
soul mate-

Anthony tosses the autographed baseball onto the floor, where
it THUDS and rolls up against Rosalinda's toes. Her face
sours at the sight of this souvenir.

RIDGEMAN
If you tell us where it is, my
partner and I'll be done in time to
get the breakfast special at
Bert's.

(MORE)

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
That might even be reason enough to
forget about you and this gun of
yours.

Ridgeman leans in closer to Rosalinda.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Where?

ROSALINDA
The closet. There-

The Columbian girl motions with her left arm while the right one maintains its function as an ersatz brassiere.

Anthony goes to the indicated closet and slides its mirrored door into the wall. An automatic light illuminates the large walk-in closet, where hang three walls of variegated suits and blazers.

ANTHONY
I've seen stores with smaller
inventories.

ROSALINDA
On the right--in the wall behind
the suits.

INT. CLOSET / VASQUEZ'S CONDO - SAME

Anthony enters the closet, turns to his right, and shoves aside fifty thousand dollars worth of linen, silk, and wool. At present, he shines a penlight on the revealed wall and leans in close for an inspection. A thin hairline groove shows in the luminous circle.

The New Yorker clubs his gun and POUNDS the wall. Wood CRACKS, and the edges of a hidden opening become clear.

Anthony pulls the panel loose and aims his penlight into the darkness. Behind the opening lies a recessed cubby that contains a dark green duffel bag.

ANTHONY
I smell three eggs over easy.

INT. BEDROOM / VASQUEZ'S CONDO - SAME

Anthony carries the bulky duffel into the room and sets it upon the bed. Seizing the little metal slide, he UNZIPS the bag. Lying within and wrapped in plastic and duct tape are six twelve-pound bricks of cocaine and five two-inch stacks of fifty dollar bills.

For a lingering moment, the New Yorker stares at this collection and allows himself an unethical fantasy. The man then reluctantly returns to his law-abiding reality.

ANTHONY
Hash browns, pumpernickel toast.

Ridgeman appraises the cash and illicit goods.

RIDGEMAN
And that coffee you owe me.

Anthony ZIPS the duffel bag shut. Ridgeman opens the middle drawer of a bureau, pulls out a sweatshirt and pants, and tosses these items at Rosalinda's bare feet.

The young woman claims the clothing from the floor and begins to dress as the grim fellow walks away, shuts off the ceiling fans, and opens the door.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Officer?

DAVIDS (O.S.)
Detective?

RIDGEMAN
Drag Mr. Vasquez inside. We've got narcotics, cash, and two imbeciles to drive uptown and paper.

Alarmed, Rosalinda faces Ridgeman and shakes her head.

ROSALINDA
You said you'd let me go if I told you where the bag was.

A feigned look of confusion plays upon the face of the grim fellow, who then looks at his partner.

RIDGEMAN
Did you understand her?

ANTHONY
Nope.

INT. BERT'S DINER - 8:52 AM

Buoyant POP MUSIC emerges from speakers that are embedded in the ceiling of Bert's Diner, the owner of which favors aquamarine fixtures and turquoise wallpaper. Sitting in a corner booth and holding coffees are Ridgeman and Anthony. Neither man is entirely awake.

RIDGEMAN
Is this a guy or a girl singing this song?

The New Yorker listens for a moment and shakes his head.

ANTHONY
Can't tell.

RIDGEMAN

Don't know that there's that much
of a difference these days.

ANTHONY

I think the line was obliterated
the day men starting saying, 'We're
pregnant' when their wives were.

A DOUR WAITRESS carries a loaded platter to the corner booth.
Steam rises from the eggs, bacon, and hash browns that the
woman places on the table before the partners.

DOUR WAITRESS

Your breakfast specials.

Anthony grabs a piece of buttered pumpernickel toast.

RIDGEMAN

Thanks.

Two DINGS sound in unison. The partners exchange looks of
concern and from their pockets withdraw their cellular
phones. At present, the men finger passcodes and read text
messages. Neither individual is gladdened by the contents of
this communication.

ANTHONY

I didn't know the Chief Lieutenant
was so fond of intrigue.

Annoyed, Ridgeman pockets his cellphone and turns to the
Redheaded Waitress, who is now walking away from the table.

RIDGEMAN

Excuse me, but can you put our food
in to go containers?

DOUR WAITRESS

You mean pack up everything I just
carried from all the way over there-
(she points to the
kitchen)
-to the farthest table in
existence?

RIDGEMAN

Correct.

DOUR WAITRESS

I'll get you take-out boxes.

INT. CHIEF LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE / POLICE PRECINCT - 9:10 AM

An inscrutable, suited, and silver-haired white man of fifty-
six years sits in a big office behind a neat mahogany desk
that supports a number of framed family pictures, a laptop
computer, a box of cigars, two telephones, and an engraved
name plate. Upon the wall behind CHIEF LIEUTENANT G.

CALVERT are eleven awards, six medals, and eight framed front pages that contain his name. His cool blue eyes look through the nearby picture window toward the clean metropolitan area that lies outside.

At present, Ridgeman closes the office door and joins Anthony in front of the desk. The silver-haired superior SNIFFS the air, faces forward, and gestures to two chairs. The wary partners sit upon the indicated seats.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
Did you two crash into a truck
filled with breakfast buffet?

RIDGEMAN
We were getting the specials at
Bert's when we got your message.
Boxed them up and rode over with
their emanations.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
I like their pumpernickel toast.

ANTHONY
They get it fresh from Jeanette's--
the bakery across the way.

Chief Lieutenant G. Calvert fills his lungs, glances at the unseen laptop screen, and eyes his guests.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
There's an issue with the bust you
two made this morning.

Anthony SNORTS as Ridgeman wrinkles his mouth with distaste.

RIDGEMAN
Who's complaining?

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
A civilian who saw you guys out on
the fire escape.

The New Yorker bristles.

ANTHONY
Vasquez was armed and a threat. We
did what was--

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
There's a video.

The air thickens in the office. For a moment, the partners and their superior share an uncomfortable silence.

RIDGEMAN
You've seen it?

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 I have.
 (he shrugs)
 It's not terrible...but it
 certainly could be much, much
 better. The sound is shit--the
 civilian was too far away to get
 anything intelligible--so that
 helps us.

RIDGEMAN
 Who tipped you?

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 My contact at channel seven.

ANTHONY
 Anchovies.

Ridgeman feels his insides tighten.

RIDGEMAN
 When's it airing?

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 Six o'clock. You'll
 survive...though I think this'll
 end our current conversations about
 raises. And promotions.

ANTHONY
 Anchovies.

RIDGEMAN
 We didn't give Vasquez that much
 cast iron. And almost all of it was
 me. Anthony didn't-

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 You gave him plenty. And Mr.
 Lurasetti's in that video, smiling
 like a yearbook picture when you
 stepped on that hombre's cabeza.

Chief Lieutenant G. Calvert lets this image settle in the
 minds of Ridgeman and Anthony.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT (CONT'D)
 Our Inspector--our Mexican-American
 Inspector--isn't likely to be
 lenient, though your productivity
 is exemplary and will keep you from
 losing your badges.

Anthony stews over the situation. Ridgeman fingers his
 knuckles and exhales through his nose.

RIDGEMAN
 Politics. Like always.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 Right. Like cellphones--and just as
 annoying--politics are everywhere.
 Being branded a racist in today's
 public forum is like being accused
 of communism in the fifties.
 Whether it's a possibly offensive
 remark made in a private phone call
 or the indelicate treatment of a
 minority who sells drugs to
 children, the entertainment
 industry formerly known as 'The
 News' needs villains.

Ridgeman and Anthony make unhappy extrapolations as Chief
 Lieutenant G. Calvert picks up an unlit cigar, inspects it
 for a moment, and returns it to its box, where lie a dozen
 others that look exactly the same.

ANTHONY
 There's certainly nothing
 hypocritical with the media
 handling every perceived
 intolerance with complete and utter
 intolerance.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 It's bullshit, but it's reality.

ANTHONY
 But I'm not racist. Every Martin
 Luther King Day, I order a cup of
 dark roast.

Chief Lieutenant G. Calvert flashes a frown at Anthony.

RIDGEMAN
 How long's this suspension gonna
 be?

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 Six weeks, no pay...though maybe I
 can get the inspector down to a
 month.

RIDGEMAN
 We need the hours.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 I know what detectives make in
 Bulwark.

Ridgeman gently sets his badge upon the mahogany desk.
 Anthony SNORTS and flippantly tosses his brass. The second
 icon slides across the wood and CLINKS against the first.

Irked, the superior eyes the New Yorker.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT (CONT'D)
 Go have some of that pumpernickel.

Chief Lieutenant G. Calvert gestures at the doorway, through which Anthony soon departs. The lock catches in the jamb.

For a few moments, the superior appraises the grim fellow.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT (CONT'D)
Ridgeman... You've gotta be aware
of this stuff. Digital eyes are
everywhere.

RIDGEMAN
I do what I think best when I'm out
there. I was that way when we were
partners, and I'm still that way
now.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
There's a reason I'm sitting behind
this desk, running things, and
you're crouching on fire escapes in
the cold for hours with a partner
who's fifteen years younger than
you are.

RIDGEMAN
Anthony's got a mouth with it's own
engine, but he's solid.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
That wasn't my point.

Brooding, Ridgeman looks away from Chief Lieutenant G. Calvert and at the wall, where hangs a framed newspaper that has the headline, 'Bulwark Officers Calvert and Ridgeman seize \$5,000,000 Drug Shipment and Make 8 Arrests'.

The grim fellow returns his attention to his knuckles.

RIDGEMAN
Thanks for letting us know about
the situation. And for anything you
say to the inspector on our behalf.

Ridgeman puts his callused hands on the arms of his chair and starts to rise.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
One thing. Before you go.

The grim fellow settles back down and eyes his superior.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT (CONT'D)
I watched that video a couple of
times. You threw more cast iron
than you needed to. When we worked
together, you weren't so rough.

RIDGEMAN
And?

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 It's not healthy for you to scuff
 concrete as long as you have. You
 get results, but you're losing
 perspective...and compassion. A
 couple more year out there, and
 you're a human steamroller, covered
 with spikes and fueled by bile.

RIDGEMAN
 There're a lot of imbeciles out
 there.

Morosely, Chief Lieutenant G. Calvert appraises Ridgeman.

CHIEF LIEUTENANT G. CALVERT
 Use your time off to think about
 things...talk them over with
 Melanie. Spend some time with her
 and Sara, okay?

RIDGEMAN
 I will.

It is clear that the superior doubts the sincerity of this
 response. At present, the grim fellow rises, glances at his
 abandoned badge, and departs the office.

EXT. FORGE AVENUE AT 56TH - 57TH STREET - LATE DAY

Yellowing, late day sunlight slants across the sky and
 illuminates the facades of the 99 Cent store, Thai
 restaurant, and gray apartment buildings that stand along
 Forge Avenue. Leaning against the iron posts of a fence that
 circumscribes a concrete park are three BLACK TEENAGERS who
 share an irregularly shaped smoke and a massive cup of soda
 while watching a Hispanic bicyclist of twelve who is named
 WHEELIE. This zooming individual pedals past the trio, SKIDS
 to a halt, raises up his back tire, pivots, and bounces
 repeatedly upon his front wheel.

TALL BLACK TEENAGER
 Wheelie's got some skills.

SKINNY BLACK TEENAGER
 No-
 (he exhales smoke)
 -doubt.

Rounding the corner onto the Forge Avenue sidewalk is SARA, a
 lone white girl of twelve who wears jeans, a heavy backpack,
 and sunglasses. Her hands are in the pockets of her charcoal-
 colored jacket, the hood of which conceals her blond hair.
 Avoiding a used condom, she walks north.

Wheelie SLAMS the front tire of his bike against the wide
 sidewalk and sees Sara, who is currently a hundred feet down
 the block. Grinning, the Hispanic youth steps on his pedals
 and speeds past the trio of stoned watchers.

TALL BLACK TEENAGER
The kid just hit puberty!

Tires WHIZZ. Ignoring the oncoming bicycle, Sara continues to walk north. Wheelie hunches over and pedals faster.

Forty feet remain between the speeding bike and the girl pedestrian. Tires WHIZZ, and the distance diminishes.

Wheelie speeds directly at Sara, who clenches her jaw, but alters neither the direction nor the speed of her strides. Impact is imminent.

SKINNY BLACK TEENAGER
Kaboom!

The girl stops breathing as the bicyclist veers and WHOOSHES safely past her. At the park fence, the stoned trio LAUGHS.

SHORT BLACK TEENAGER
Bitch's got nerves.

Sara continues to walk north along Forge Avenue.

TALL BLACK TEENAGER
(calling out)
Hey Wheelie!

Squeezing the brakes and shifting weight, Wheelie SKIDS one hundred and eighty degrees.

WHEELIE
Yeah...?

TALL BLACK TEENAGER
You scared of this princess?

WHEELIE
Shit no.

The girl's strides remain unhurried, but the recent near collision has noticeably quickened her breath.

TALL BLACK TEENAGER
Her backpack looks real heavy. I wonder what's in there...?

SHORT BLACK TEENAGER
Me too.

TALL BLACK TEENAGER
Maybe she's got her crown in there.
Ain't you curious?

Wheelie looks away from the stoned provocateurs and eyes Sara's sizable backpack.

WHEELIE
I'll get it.

Seventy feet north of Wheelie, Sarah clenches her jaw. Her heart rate rises as she continues her unhurried walk.

Wheelie steps on his pedals and shoots forward. Tires WHIZZ.

The distance between the pedaling Hispanic youth and the girl diminishes to fifty feet. With red-eyed grins, the three stoned teenagers watch the mischief unfold.

Wheelie takes his left hand from the corresponding grip and prepares to grab the backpack, which is currently thirty feet away. Sara withdraws a small canister of pepper spray from the pocket of her jacket. Her hands are shaking.

TALL BLACK TEENAGER
She's got a spicy!

Wheelie squeezes the brakes, SKIDS, and veers clear of Sara, who holds the nozzle of the pepper spray at his eye level.

The Hispanic youth bikes to a safe distance as the girl pockets the cannister and continues forward. At the fence, the trio CACKLES at Wheelie, whose eyes are wide with fear.

The Tall Black Teenager sucks some soda and shakes his head.

TALL BLACK TEENAGER (CONT'D)
Wheelie almost browned his whites.

The trio CACKLES. Embarrassed, Wheelie reddens.

WHEELIE
My sister sprayed me with one of those once. That shit hurts.

Again, the trio CACKLES. The Hispanic youth simmers, glances at the girl (who is near the north corner of the block), and ruminates. Decided, he steps on his pedals.

Wheelie sweeps toward the trio, snatches the two-liter cup of soda from the Tall Black Teenager, and rides north on the sidewalk as quickly as he can. At present, he discards the plastic top and grips the container by its waxy rim.

Hearing the oncoming bike, Sara looks over her shoulder. Orange soda SPLASHES all over her face and jacket. Ice cubes RATTLE upon impacting the concrete as Wheelie veers clear of his victim and out into the street, where he narrowly misses a HONKING car. The trio of stoned provocateurs CACKLE.

Wet and shaking, Sara suppresses her emotions, takes off her sunglasses, plucks ice cubes from her hood, wipes soda from her face, and crosses to the north side of the street.

WHEELIE (CONT'D)
Don't you never ever point no spicy at me again you white bitch.

Ignoring the Hispanic youth, the girl reaches the far side of the road, takes six more steps, and walks into a gray, ten-story apartment building that is numbered 5601.

INT. LIVING & DINING ROOM / APARTMENT 435 - MOMENTS LATER

A key ring JINGLES, and two bolts SNAP. Sara enters the small, neat main room of an apartment that is furnished with brown sofas, a lacquered dining table, shelves of books, a television, and paintings of mountain ranges. The soaked girl shuts the doors, twists two locks, and takes off her backpack. A tenacious ice cube falls from her hair and CLATTERS upon the tile. Her eyes shine with tears that she forcefully suppresses.

SARA

I won't.

The girl pulls off her sneakers and sets them on a metal rack of neatly arranged men's and women's shoes.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Sara?

Sara rubs her eyes and clears her throat.

SARA

Yeah, Mom. It's me.

Uneven FOOTFALLS sound elsewhere in the apartment, and a door opens. From the adjacent room and walking with the help of a cane is MELANIE, a tall, lean forty-seven year old woman in a robe and socks who has short blond hair, broad shoulders, and a strong jaw. Her blue eyes appraise those of her daughter.

MELANIE

Sweetie...what's wrong?

Sara tries to speak, but is unable to do so. Concerned, Melanie grips the head of her cane and ambles forward.

EXT. TAN, STUCCOED BUILDING - TWILIGHT

Standing within a middle class area of Bulwark and outlined in amber light by the sinking sun is a tan, stuccoed, six-story apartment building.

INT. APARTMENT 632 / TAN, STUCCOED BUILDING - SAME

A pockmarked fellow of fifty-four years who has a brown suit, sunken eyes, and a bald head enters a dark, wholly unfurnished apartment. This fellow is DMETROVIC. His left hand closes door 632 and twists two bolts, which SNAP.

The pockmarked man walks across the vacant enclosure and slides a door along its runner.

INT. CLOSET / APARTMENT 632 / TAN, STUCCOED BUILDING - SAME

Dmetrovic enters an empty closet, closes the panel, and fingers two hidden buttons that are embedded in the ceiling. Counter locks SNAP closed and CLICK open. At present, he turns and presses his hands against the rear wall.

INT. NARROW, WINDOWLESS ROOM / TAN, STUCCOED BUILDING - SAME

A panel opens as Dmetrovic strides from the closet into a narrow, windowless room that has a cot, a small table, and a mini-fridge. Near the foot of the bed are two briefcases and upon the mattress lie three cellular phones, some 'C' batteries, and a 1980s tape cassette player.

The pockmarked man closes the door, slots a bolt, and crosses the narrow room in two strides. At the cot, he picks up a cellphone with his left hand and thumbs the function button.

Upon the screen is a text message that reads, 'Contents of Vault 2B: Confirmed. Duration of storage: Unknown'.

Dmetrovic sets the device down, claims a blue cellphone, thumbs a connection, and places the receiver to his left ear. Somebody answers.

DMETROVIC
(mild Russian accent)
We must be ready by tomorrow night.

INT. ETHAN'S ROOM / APARTMENT 921 - SAME

In a small bedroom that has several action figure displays and a number of shonen anime posters, the fourteen-year-old black boy Ethan sits on the edge of his mattress between his collapsed wheelchair and his older brother Henry Johns, who was released from jail three weeks earlier. The siblings are dressed in denim and hold the wireless controllers of the video game system that currently illuminates the television.

ETHAN
You've gotta be careful around
here. This part's got lions.

CRACKLING footfalls emanate from the television as the brothers move their characters forward.

HENRY JOHNS
Can't we shoot 'em?

ETHAN
They're really hard to kill unless
you get the pump-action shotgun.

More CRACKLING footfalls come from the television screen.

HENRY JOHNS
How do I get one of-

A lion ROARS.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

Shit!

ETHAN

Get behind me.

Henry Johns jams some buttons to the left.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Stay there.

Ethan executes a complicated thumb ritual upon his controller. Concurrent with these manipulations, a shotgun BOOMS, and the lion ROARS. The weapon BLASTS again. A pump action CLACKS, reloading, as the beast ROARS a third time. Heavy paws THUD a tattoo. Twice more, the shotgun BOOMS. The lion GROANS in pain and dies.

HENRY JOHNS

Nigga iced that feline.

ETHAN

Let's go. More are coming.

The brothers toggle their controllers forward. Footfalls CRACKLE in the speakers as their characters proceed. Running water SPLASHES.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Once we cross this stream, we've gotta look out for boa constrictors.

HENRY JOHNS

Nigga is ready for a real safari.

ETHAN

Even if my legs worked right, I wouldn't wanna hunt animals for real. That's rich white people shit.

HENRY JOHNS

Still. You real good at this game-- and the other ones we played.

ETHAN

This's what I wanna do when I grow up.

HENRY JOHNS

Play games?

ETHAN

No. I wanna make them--be a game designer. Create worlds that're different from what's outside: Places where you can be whoever.

The slim fellow considers his younger brother's words while watching the screen.

HENRY JOHNS
They got a school that teaches you
how to do that? A college or
somethin'?

ETHAN
There are schools for it.

HENRY JOHNS
Maybe after you finish high school,
you can-

A DING sounds. Henry Johns withdraws a cellular phone from his pocket, glances at the screen, and looks at Ethan.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
I gotta go. Can you save this
adventure?

ETHAN
I'll save it.

EXT. COURTYARD / PROJECT APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

The sun has almost set. Henry Johns buttons his denim jacket as he walks across the concrete courtyard toward the PURRING dark green sedan that hugs the curb. Behind the wheel of this idling car sits Biscuit, the stout and goateed black fellow of who had previously conveyed the slim young man from the penitentiary to his home.

INT. BISCUIT'S DARK GREEN SEDAN - SAME

Henry Johns lands in the passenger's seat of the dark green sedan and pulls the door shut. Biscuit nods a salutation.

HENRY JOHNS
His cousins are gonna be there this
time?

BISCUIT
They are.

HENRY JOHNS
I don't like doin' things with so
many question marks everywhere.

The stout fellow scratches his left ear and shakes his head.

BISCUIT
Me neither, but the date was moved
up, and we received our advances.
Plus Andre vouched for them.

Biscuit shifts gears and drives up the street.

HENRY JOHNS

Andre hisself is questionable. You got our insurance?

BISCUIT

In the glove compartment.

Henry Johns opens the glove compartment. Resting inside of this enclosure and under a little light bulb are three loaded semiautomatics. Each of these firearms is separately wrapped with cellophane.

BISCUIT (CONT'D)

Why'd you want them wrapped in cellophane?

HENRY JOHNS

Sometimes a nigga ain't got time for gloves or to wipe things down.

BISCUIT

I hope we don't need to use those.

Nodding in agreement, the slim fellow unscrews the little light bulb. The glove compartment falls into darkness.

HENRY JOHNS

We stash them in the vehicles when we get the chance. The van and the getaway.

INT. KWIX MINIMART - DUSK

A Chinese American of twenty-five who is named SID smokes a cigarette behind the counter of a minimart, the walls of which support magazines, tobaccos, condoms, potato chips, candy bars, medicines, and overstuffed refrigerators. Upon the screen of a mounted television is the shaky, cellphone-recorded footage of Ridgeman stepping on the head of Vasquez and a caption that reads, 'Bulwark Police Officers Accused of Using Unnecessary Force.'

At this violence, the cashier grins and blows smoke.

The door flies open, and a lean man in a black jogging outfit hastens into the minimart. His face is completely hidden by a black ski mask and blue goggles, and his hands are covered with black gloves.

Sid gapes in fear as this ROBBER lifts a silencer-fitted machine gun and flips the sign in the door so that the 'Closed' side faces outward.

ROBBER

You've got five seconds to hand me your drawer.

SID
Okay, okay.

ROBBER
One...

Sid presses the 'No Sale' button and nothing happens. Behind the blue goggles, inscrutable eyes monitor the cashier.

ROBBER (CONT'D)
Two...

SID
Fuck.

Sid presses the 'No Sale' button twice more, but his register does not respond. The shaking cigarette glows, rapidly shrinking, as the panicked cashier sucks smoke.

ROBBER
Three...

Sid suddenly recalls something, twists a key in the register to another setting, and fingers the 'No Sale' button. A DING sounds, and the drawer slides open.

The Robber unslings a duffel bag from his left shoulder.

ROBBER (CONT'D)
Four...

The cashier pries the black plastic tray from the metal housing and SLAMS the earlier upon the counter. Coins CLINK and RATTLE in the compartments.

ROBBER (CONT'D)
Fi-

SID
There! It's yours. Take it.

The door opens, and in walks a TEENAGE BOY.

TEENAGE BOY
I really need a pack of-

The Teenage Boy sees the Robber. Gunpowder flashes at the end of the silencer, which is pointing downward. Bullets chop through the ankles of the young customer, who then spills forward and SMACKS his face against the linoleum.

The shrinking cigarette glows as Sid reaches beneath the register. Swiveling, the Robber redirects his weapon and squeezes the trigger. Gunpowder flashes. Bullets rip open the cashier's neck, and from his hands falls a sawed-off shotgun. Smoke rises from his shredded throat.

The Robber shoves the cash tray into his slung bag, walks toward the door, and sends a burst of bullets into the right ear of the MOANING Teenage Boy.

From urine-soaked jeans, the criminal withdraws a wallet and a cellular phone, both of which land inside of the duffel.

The Robber reaches the door, looks back at lights, and then glances at the television, which currently shows still photos of Ridgeman and Anthony. Gunpowder flashes. Police faces and fluorescent bulbs SHATTER in a welter of glass and HISSING, CRACKLING sparks. This destruction is brightly reflected in the criminal's blue goggles.

Darkness expands throughout the minimart. At present, the Robber kicks a severed right foot out of his path, flings the door, and enters the gray dusk.

INT. FEINBAUM'S JEWELS - EARLY EVENING

Glaring specular lights brightly illuminate the jewelry store, a place in which tasteful, refined items are discretely arrayed behind glass and upon black velvet. Near the front door of the shop stands a sizable SECURITY GUARD, and sitting on a stool behind the counter is FEINBAUM, a short, bald, and dapper man of sixty. At present, Anthony enters the establishment.

FEINBAUM
Good evening and welcome back, Mr.
Lurasetti.

ANTHONY
Anybody born in New York calls me
Tony.

FEINBAUM
Tony it is. One moment, please-

Feinbaum hurriedly disappears through an open doorway as Anthony crosses the shop. Seconds later, the diminutive jeweler returns. Held in his little hands is a small black box, one which he proudly yields to his customer.

Anthony opens the lid. Nestled in folds of black silk is an engagement ring that has five diamonds arranged in a diagonal line upon a white gold band. The sight of this object brightens his mood, but his professional concerns soon diminish his joy.

FEINBAUM (CONT'D)
Is something wrong with it? Tony?

ANTHONY
No, no. It's beautiful...exactly
like you promised. If Denise has
any doubts about saying, 'Yes,'
when I'm on my knee, this'll nudge
her in the right direction.

An unspoken question sits upon the face of the jeweler.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
I've got an issue at work.

FEINBAUM
Do you need a payment plan? I'll happily-

ANTHONY
Thanks, but I saved enough for this. It's a different kind of problem.

FEINBAUM
My wife has two brothers who are therapists, and three sisters who are lawyers.

ANTHONY
Your family get-togethers don't sound relaxing.

FEINBAUM
They are if you don't ever say anything.

ANTHONY
Well...my problems don't require those kinds of professionals. I'm just thinking about the sort of future I can offer my girlfriend...
(he eyes the ring)
That life won't have lots of diamonds.

INT. LIVING & DINING ROOM / APARTMENT 435 - EVENING

Bolts SNAP, and the door swings wide. Into the apartment that Sara had entered two hours earlier walks Ridgeman, his weary mind clogged with the events of the day. His left elbow closes the door, and his thick fingers SNAP the locks and toss his navy windbreaker onto a hook.

The grim fellow sees a moving shadow through the far portal, hears something CLANK, and walks toward the inhabited room. Work boots THUD upon the tiles.

MELANIE (O.S.)
Shoes.

Ridgeman stops, retreats two steps, and places a palm against the wall. With effort, he unties the laces of his work boots, pulls them off, and sets them in a vacant parking space upon the shoe rack.

RIDGEMAN
Forgot.

INT. KITCHEN / APARTMENT 435 - SAME

Ridgeman walks into the yellow, brown, and white kitchen, where Melanie peels potatoes while sitting on a stool at a small wooden island. The grim fellow sets a kiss upon the lips of the blond woman and walks toward the refrigerator.

RIDGEMAN
Want a beer?

MELANIE
No thanks. I had to take some extra
meds today.

RIDGEMAN
Sorry to hear that.

Ridgeman opens the refrigerator and reaches inside.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
You feeling okay now?

MELANIE
Fair.

The grim fellow claims a beer can, shuts the door, and notices the clothing that currently soaks in the sink. Gesturing at this sight, he turns to his wife.

RIDGEMAN
What's this about?

Melanie stops peeling potatoes.

MELANIE
Some kids were menacing Sara on her
way back from the bus.
(she points the peeler at
the sink)
One of them threw a cup of orange
soda all over her.

Anger darkens Ridgeman's face.

RIDGEMAN
What kids?

MELANIE
Ones she didn't recognize. Three
blacks and a Hispanic on a bike.
Though does it actually matter who?
This is the fifth time.
(she SNORTS)
This fucking neighborhood just
keeps getting worse and worse.

RIDGEMAN
She's okay?

MELANIE

Yeah...but coming home from school--
walking four blocks--shouldn't be
an ordeal.

These words weigh heavily upon the shoulders of the recently
suspended detective.

RIDGEMAN

It shouldn't.

Ridgeman walks to the opposite side of the small island,
opens his beer, and drinks a mouthful.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

You offered to meet her at the bus
stop? Escort her back?

MELANIE

I did, but she knows it isn't easy
for me to get around a lot of the
time. And she'd be too embarrassed
anyways.

RIDGEMAN

She's got two sets of cop DNA--of
course she's tough.

MELANIE

Yeah--especially for her age and
gender--but she's getting
older...and more womanly.
(she shakes her head)
These boys are gonna start having
different kinds of ideas about her
pretty soon, if they don't already.

Awful ruminations fill the minds of both parents. For a
ponderous moment, Melanie peels a potato and Ridgeman drinks
from his can of beer.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I never thought I was a racist
before living in this area--I'm
about as liberal as any ex-cop
could ever be--but now...

The woman relinquishes a fully peeled potato, which then
PLUNKS in a bowl of water and sinks. From a paper bag, she
claims a new spud.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

We really need to move.

RIDGEMAN

I know.

MELANIE

Yesterday or the day before.

RIDGEMAN

I know.

Melanie eyes Ridgeman for a moment and then turns her attention to the new potato. With the peeler, she scrapes away reddish-brown skin.

MELANIE

This thing that's going on with you and Anthony right now isn't gonna help, so I called up-

RIDGEMAN

You saw the Vasquez footage?

MELANIE (O.S.)

I did.

RIDGEMAN

And?

MELANIE

It's really time you got a new windbreaker.

RIDGEMAN

A couple people made comments.

Ridgeman drinks another mouthful of beer as Melanie relinquishes another peeled potato, draws a knife from the utensil block, and sets down a cutting board.

MELANIE

I was starting to say before that I called up Bulwark Security Provider and-

RIDGEMAN

No. You are not doing security guard stuff.

MELANIE

We need money to move, and I can take painkillers if my-

RIDGEMAN

Absolutely not.

Ridgeman shakes his head, circumvents the table, and approaches Melanie.

MELANIE

We need-

RIDGEMAN

Melanie. You're taking painkillers to peel potatoes.

(he gestures)

This idea isn't worth debating.

Teary-eyed, the woman sets down the knife, balls up her fists, and clears her throat.

MELANIE

But I want to do something--I need to do something--as a mother, as a former cop--or some day...some day you and me are in a hospital room with our daughter talking to a rape counselor.

Ridgeman leans forward and hugs Melanie, who SNIFFLES twice as she fights against her fears. At that moment, a very big decision is made by the grim fellow.

RIDGEMAN

I'll handle this.

Melanie looks at Ridgeman, who is currently withdrawing.

MELANIE

How?

RIDGEMAN

I've got a way...but it isn't anything we're gonna talk about.

An unspoken question sits between the couple like a barrier.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

Ever.

Eventually, the woman nods her head in acceptance.

MELANIE

Okay.

INT. DEN & LIVING ROOM / APARTMENT 921 - MOMENTS LATER

Ridgeman walks across the main room of the apartment, arrives at a closed door, and gently KNOCKS.

RIDGEMAN

Sara?

SARA (O.S.)

Yeah?

Ridgeman opens the door and looks inside. Lying abed upon a dark purple blanket and reading a book that has a picture of two lovely Sorceresses on its cover is Sara, now showered and dressed in pajamas.

RIDGEMAN

The show about the lion cubs is on if you wanna watch it with me.

The girl looks down at her book and then returns her gaze to her father.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
If you'd rather read, that's-

SARA
No, I'll come.
(she puts the book on her
nightstand)
I've just been staring at the same
page for like twenty minutes
anyways.

RIDGEMAN
Want something to nibble?

INT. DEN & LIVING ROOM / APARTMENT 435 - MOMENTS LATER

Ridgeman and Sara are sitting next to each other on the couch in the main room. Between them lies an open box of chocolate oatmeal cookies, and upon the television screen, three lions cubs stalk across the African veldt.

RIDGEMAN
You're okay with what happened?

SARA
Yeah.
(she chews)
Fine.

Melanie enters the room and sits next to Ridgeman. The parents settle together and appraise their daughter, whose attention is wholly focused upon the lion cubs. One of these felines joyfully bounds upon a rock and surveys the veldt.

SARA (CONT'D)
They're so cute before they get
big.

Ridgeman pats Sara's arm affectionately, turns his head, and leans toward Melanie.

RIDGEMAN
(quietly)
I've gotta run an errand. Should be
back in a couple hours.

Questions appear on the face of the retired policewoman, but are not voiced aloud.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting behind the wheel of an old gray sedan that has tinted windows, lumpy seats, and a cracked dashboard, Ridgeman drives out of an underground parking lot. Vintage SOUL MUSIC plays on an oldies station.

Headlights pan across a grocery cart that contains fifty aluminum cans as his car corners onto Forge Avenue. Upon frowning lips, the grim fellow sets a cigarette, which he then lights. Hirsute fibers glow yellow, orange, and red.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - LATER

Two one-inch butts lie in the ashtray as Ridgeman lights a third cigarette. The tip catches, and fibers glow yellow, orange, and red as the car rolls east. A sign on the right hand side of the road garners his attention. Luminous letters advertise the 'Paradise Shopping Mall & Food Court.'

INT. CENTRAL WALKWAY / PARADISE SHOPPING MALL - MOMENTS LATER

Ridgeman dashes his cigarette in a standing ashtray and walks into the vastness of the shopping mall. The late hour has thinned the crowds, though a score of middle class PEOPLE of varying ethnicities still inhabit the heated interior and CHATTER dull harmonies to the ambient FLUTE MUSIC. At present, the grim fellow exhales a plume of smoke and strides up the central concourse.

His eyes appraise a group of oncoming TEENAGE GIRLS who wear revealing clothes and no small amount of makeup. Hoping that a similar aesthetic does not await his own daughter, Ridgeman passes by the group, surveys the area, and sees 'FREDERICK'S FINE SUITS'. At this fancy establishment, the grim fellow flings the front door, which is a thick glass pane.

INT. FREDERICK'S FINE SUITS - SAME

Ridgeman enters the suit store, the walls of which display many of the expensive woolen, linen, and silken items that are for sale. A DAPPER SALESMAN who has a viridescent suit, neat hair, and an exquisite smile approaches the new arrival, whose eyes are currently scanning the farthest recesses of the shop.

DAPPER SALESMAN

How may I-

RIDGEMAN

I'm here to talk with Friedrich. Or
'Frederick', if he prefers.

Still smiling, the Dapper Salesman appraises Ridgeman.

DAPPER SALESMAN

And who-

RIDGEMAN

Tell him Ridgeman is here.

DAPPER SALESMAN

I'll go see if he is available.

RIDGEMAN

He is.

Uneasy, the Dapper Salesman retreats past the register, where stands a curious female CASHIER whose dark lavender skirt suit displays a noteworthy amount of cleavage. Several hanging suits flutter like apparitions as a door opens and closes in the rear of the store.

The grim fellow eyes a nearby single-breasted jacket that has notched lapels, takes a closer look, and fingers the fabric. At present, he turns to the Cashier.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

How much's this one? I don't see a tag.

CASHIER

Five thousand dollars.

RIDGEMAN

So it's bulletproof?

CASHIER

Excuse me?

FOOTFALLS echo in the back and garner Ridgeman's attention. Hanging suits stir like ghosts as the Dapper Salesman and an immaculate man of sixty-five who has a somber face and cold blue eyes emerge from an office. This latter, far more imposing fellow is FRIEDRICH.

FRIEDRICH

(German Accent)

Detective Ridgeman. What a pleasure it is to discover you in my establishment.

The sincerity of this statement is very questionable. At present, Friedrich reaches Ridgeman and extends a hand, which the latter fellow mechanically claims, shakes, and releases.

FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)

Are you looking for a new suit? Now that you have violently earned some leisure time...?

RIDGEMAN

I'm not.

Smiling falsely, Friedrich appraises Ridgeman.

FRIEDRICH

Shall we go to the back?

RIDGEMAN

Yep.

Friedrich leads Ridgeman toward the back of the store, opens a door, and motions inside. As the grim fellow walks forward, the shop owner eyes the Dapper Salesman.

FRIEDRICH
Do not interrupt us.

INT. PRIVATE OFFICE / FREDERICK'S FINE SUITS - SAME

An oaken desk, plush chairs, a leather couch, a mini-bar, and a mounted television furnish this carpeted back office, which is illuminated by a standing lamp that has a rose-hued shade. Ridgeman enters the room, and is soon joined by Friedrich, who shuts the door, SNAPS a lock, and gestures to the sofa.

RIDGEMAN
Please-

The grim fellow sits upon SQUEAKING upholstery as the shop owner walks toward the mini-bar.

FRIEDRICH
Would you care for a-

RIDGEMAN
I'm not here for a beverage.

The host nods his head, pours an inch of bourbon, and claims his seat on the opposite side of the desk.

FRIEDRICH
So...?

RIDGEMAN
How's your son doing these days?

Coolly, Friedrich scrutinizes Ridgeman.

FRIEDRICH
He is doing well. Very well, in fact. His mother and I are taking him to visit campuses next month.
(he SIPS bourbon)
He scored very highly on his tests.

RIDGEMAN
I thought he had potential.

A smile flickers briefly upon the shop owner's somber face.

FRIEDRICH
Thank you. I know that you are not inclined toward making exceptions.

RIDGEMAN

He was a kid. The ringleaders are in jail, and I knew that I could get something more valuable from you some day if I let him slip through a crack.

With obvious misgivings, Friedrich drinks more bourbon, sets the glass down, and tents his perfectly manicured fingers.

FRIEDRICH

How may I be of aid?

RIDGEMAN

I need a lead.

FRIEDRICH

I am not as well informed as I once was. What're you hoping to find?

RIDGEMAN

A dealer or a buyer. Preferably one who's in from out of town.

Sickened by this request, Friedrich reaches for his bourbon glass and drains its amber remainder.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting behind the wheel of the gray sedan, Ridgeman corners onto an avenue, thumbs a contact on his cellular phone, and presses the receiver to his right ear.

RIDGEMAN

Anthony.

(he listens)

Yeah. Be outside my place at four thirty.

(he listens)

Yes, A.M.

(he listens)

Put on your fake license plate, and bring all your hardware. Dress nonchalant.

INT. BEDROOM / APARTMENT 435 - 4:10

Melanie and Ridgeman sleep beneath a woolen blanket in the king-sized bed that dominates this small room. A cellular phone rests in the exact middle of the grim fellow's broad chest, and a clock on the nearby nightstand reads, '4:10.'

For a moment, there is only the gentle sound of the intertwined couple BREATHING. The cellphone BUZZES, and Ridgeman awakens.

EXT. FORGE AVENUE AT 56TH - 57TH STREET - 4:29

Forge Avenue is quiet and traffic is a rumor. Dressed in a gray jacket and blue jeans, Ridgeman smokes a cigarette while standing outside of the apartment building in which he lives. Held in his free hand are two heavy garbage bags.

At present, the grim fellow monitors the two SHADOWY FIGURES who are scaling up the iron fence of the nearby park. This suspicious duo disappears, GIGGLING, and the suspended detective takes another drag on his cigarette.

Headlights flash and illuminate a HOMELESS WOMAN who has a can-filled shopping cart on the far side of the avenue. Ridgeman turns his head and eyes the oncoming vehicle, a new black sedan that has tinted windows. Taillights flash as this car sidles to the curb.

The grim fellow crushes his dropped cigarette with a boot heel and walks toward the nearby vehicle, the passenger door of which swings open.

ANTHONY
Are you that famous police officer
I saw on the news?

Ridgeman closes the front door and opens the one that leads to the back.

INT. ANTHONY'S BLACK SEDAN - SAME

Discordant JAZZ MUSIC plays and leather upholstery SQUEAKS as Ridgeman settles on the rear bench of the black sedan. Up front sits Anthony, behind the steering wheel, bleary-eyed, and dressed in a weathered brown leather jacket and an equally worn pair of blue jeans. Nestled in the middle armrest are two cans of 'Megastuff' energy drink.

ANTHONY
Any reason you're back there?

RIDGEMAN
There is.

The New Yorker looks into the rearview mirror as the grim fellow shuts the door.

ANTHONY
Things're okay with you and
Melanie?

RIDGEMAN
They're fine.

ANTHONY
You're gonna tell me the nature of
this endeavor?

From the garbage bag, Ridgeman withdraws a lumpy pillow and a plaid throw blanket.

RIDGEMAN
I'm gonna sleep.

ANTHONY
What's-

RIDGEMAN
You're gonna drive to Nineteenth
and Brant.

Anthony is surprised by the stated destination.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Please.

ANTHONY
Why're we going all the way up
there?

Ridgeman pulls off his boots, lies back on the SQUEAKING leather upholstery, and pulls the blanket over himself.

RIDGEMAN
Every answer I give right now will
engender three times as many
questions. Let me sleep while I
can...
Once we're there, you'll get your
answers--and a nap if you need one.

Ruminating, the New Yorker wrinkles his mouth with distaste.

ANTHONY
This sounds like a stakeout.

RIDGEMAN
Nineteenth and Brant.

Ugly saxophones struggle as the grim fellow closes his eyes.

ANTHONY
You realize that we're suspended?

RIDGEMAN
Wake me at Eighteenth.

INT. ANTHONY'S BLACK SEDAN - BEFORE DAWN

More than an hour has passed. Anthony drives underneath a blinking yellow traffic signal and dials up the odd jazz music while Ridgeman sleeps in the backseat. Street lights are off, and the sun has not yet surfaced. Surrounding the vehicle is an area that is comprised of newish apartment buildings and strip malls. The New Yorker GUZZLES the remainder of his second energy drink, sees the upcoming street sign, and glances over his shoulder.

ANTHONY
We're at Eighteenth.

Ridgeman awakens in the backseat and sits upright. His bleary eyes soon adjust to his dimly illuminated surroundings.

RIDGEMAN
Corner right.

ANTHONY
We're looking for a vantage?

RIDGEMAN
Yep.

The New Yorker dials the wheel clockwise, and the sedan corners around street signs that read, '18th' and 'Brant Avenue'. At a tranquil cruising speed, the car rolls east.

Both men scan their surroundings for a vantage. An orange sign materializes on the north side of the road and soon, the name 'Quality Value Grocery' becomes legible.

ANTHONY
How about that grocery?

RIDGEMAN
Let's check its back lot. But stop here first so I can piss.

Anthony steps on the brakes and checks his mirrors.

Ridgeman exits the car and shuts the door. In an alleyway that lies between two shops, the grim fellow walks, stops, UNZIPS himself, aims for a bush, and urinates.

Anthony opens his glove compartment, wherein lies his semiautomatic, and withdraws a small, plastic packet. FOOTFALLS sound as Ridgeman returns to the vehicle and opens the passenger door.

ANTHONY
Before you touch anything-

The New Yorker extends toward the grim fellow the small packet, which contains moist sanitary wipes. With no fondness for this task, the grim fellow snatches a sheet, cleans his hands, and shuts the door.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Ashtray.

Ridgeman stuffs the wad into an extruding ashtray and shoves the drawer back into the console.

Anthony accelerates for thirty yards, slows the vehicle, and dials the wheel to his left. The black sedan tilts back as it climbs the incline that leads into the 'Quality Value Grocery' parking lot.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
One of these opened up by my
apartment. 'Quality Value Grocery'.

RIDGEMAN
Shit?

ANTHONY
Haven't been in it.

RIDGEMAN
I thought Denise cooked.

ANTHONY
Only at her place. And she shops at
organic stores that specialize in
assuaging guilt.

The black sedan rolls past the orange grocery store and enters the rear lot, where four cars are currently parked and a milk truck RUMBLES in front of a delivery entrance.

Eyeing the layout, Ridgeman points out two automobiles that sit near the chain-link fence that runs along the north edge.

RIDGEMAN
Land between those two so that ours
isn't an island.

Anthony drives toward the indicated pair--a red hatchback and a beige station wagon. Ten spaces lie between the vehicles, and the New Yorker claims one of these with his black sedan.

ANTHONY
This's good?

Ridgeman looks through the tinted windshield and assesses their vantage.

RIDGEMAN
Perfect.

Anthony SNIFFS once, kills the engine, reaches into the armrest, and withdraws a RATTLING tin, which he then opens and extends toward Ridgeman. From this container, the grim fellow withdraws one aquamarine breath mint.

ANTHONY
Take two.

Without complying, Ridgeman closes the container, inserts the lone mint into his mouth, and points north, where Anthony then turns his gaze. Beyond the tinted windshield, the tall chain-link fence, a small weedy lot, and 19th Street stands the tan, stuccoed six-story apartment building.

RIDGEMAN
Something's going on in room six
thirty-three of that tan stucco.

ANTHONY

What?

RIDGEMAN

Hard to tell. Especially since apartment six thirty-three doesn't even exist.

The New Yorker skeptically eyes the grim fellow.

ANTHONY

How do you mean?

RIDGEMAN

There isn't a door marked six thirty-three, and it doesn't have any windows or a buzzer. No mail goes there either, but it's there.

ANTHONY

This's sounding metaphysical.

Ridgeman eyes the visible north and east faces of the tan, stuccoed building. His focus is on the sixth floor level.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You got a tip on this?

RIDGEMAN

My contact said that Pieter Dmetrovic was looking for an invisible residence.
(he nods at the building)
Six-thirty three in this tan stucco is where he landed.

ANTHONY

Dmetrovic.
(he thinks)
I don't know that name.

RIDGEMAN

He's not local.

ANTHONY

What's his line of work?

RIDGEMAN

Distribution. Heroin, mostly. Heavy bundles.

Anthony grows uneasy, eyes Ridgeman for a couple of seconds, and eventually returns his attention to the tan, stuccoed building. A lot of questions percolate inside of the New Yorker's brainpan.

ANTHONY

What're we doing here?

RIDGEMAN

You're asking me this question as a civilian? Because that's what we are right now--civilians. No different than kindergarten teachers or that hobo who collects aluminum cans outside of my building.

ANTHONY

I know where I flung my badge yesterday.

Ridgeman appraises Anthony, whose face is hard and sharp.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

What're we doing here?

RIDGEMAN

We're monitoring a suspicious individual and trying to find out if that person has any money that he doesn't need.

The New Yorker pales at the implications of this statement.

ANTHONY

Anchovies.

RIDGEMAN

If you don't want to-

ANTHONY

Christ.

The New Yorker POUNDS the door with a clenched fist.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Are you insane?

Ridgeman eyes Anthony, but does not say anything. The New Yorker is filled with equal parts contempt and disbelief.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You get suspended--not for the first time in your career, either--and you decide to become a criminal?

The grim fellow does not respond to this accusation.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

What the hell're you thinking with this?

No words emerge from Ridgeman, who calmly watches Anthony from the passenger seat.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Well?

Inscrutably, the grim fellow monitors the New Yorker.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Say something!

Anthony POUNDS a fist against the dashboard.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Talk!

Ridgeman rubs his face and takes a calm breath.

RIDGEMAN
I'm one month from my sixtieth, and I'm the same rank I was at twenty-seven.
For a lot of years, I believed that the quality of my work--what we do together, and what I did with my previous partners--would get me what I deserved. But I don't politic, I don't change with the times, and it turns out that all that shit's more important than good, honest work.

(he shakes his head)
So yesterday, after we stop a massive amount of drugs from getting into the school system, we get suspended because it wasn't done politely. And when I get home, my daughter's been assaulted for the fifth time in two years--'cause of the shit neighborhood my shit wages force us to live in. And my wife can't even do her part because she's barely making it through the day on her meds as it is.

Concerned about the women, Anthony suppresses his hostility.

ANTHONY
They're okay?

RIDGEMAN
Melanie's coping, and Sara's dealing with things better than most girls her age would...but who knows what kind of long term damage is going on with her?

Calmer yet still very uneasy, the New Yorker looks at the tan, stuccoed building and then back to his partner.

ANTHONY
There've been opportunities before. More than a few. To take a bribe, pocket a bundle, pilfer cash.

RIDGEMAN

I was a cop then and on active duty. Today, I'm a poor civilian who's almost sixty, and my salary and rank are never gonna be what I want them to be.
I can accept that, but I won't ask my wife and daughter to.

Ridgeman looks at Anthony and returns his attention to the brightening dawn sky.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

If you put all of our collars together--every imbecile we ever nabbed--they'd fill two entire wings of the state prison. Maybe three.

(he nods his head)

We have the skills--and the right--to acquire some proper compensation.

Ruminating uncomfortably, the New Yorker rubs his face.

ANTHONY

Christ.

RIDGEMAN

Weddings aren't cheap.

ANTHONY

Don't be an asshole.

(he shakes his head)

That's not what I'm thinking about.

RIDGEMAN

Do you think our wages accurately reflect what we've-

ANTHONY

Enough justifications. I'm smarter than you--by a yardstick--and you're not gonna manipulate me.

RIDGEMAN

I saw how you looked at that duffel bag yesterday.

ANTHONY

Quiet. Let me think.

Ridgeman leans back in his seat and watches Anthony. The New Yorker shakes his head while ruminating.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Anchovies.

RIDGEMAN

If you don't wanna know any more
about this, fling the gear and drop
me off.

ANTHONY

I don't want you getting hurt.

RIDGEMAN

I'm not looking for a guardian. I
can handle things by myself if I
have to.

ANTHONY

You don't know that.

RIDGEMAN

Not for certain, no, but if it
looks like I can't, I'll disengage
and find something else.

The grim fellow and the New Yorker eye each other directly.

ANTHONY

This is a bad idea. For you and for
me. Bad like lasagna in a can.

RIDGEMAN

Fling the gear and drop me off.

No answer comes from Anthony, who is still deliberating.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

If you get involved, it's for
yourself. It isn't to help me out--
because you pity my situation or
because we're partners or because
we're friends who grill burgers and
sausages on Sundays and go to the
fights.
If you do this, it's because you
want to earn. That's it.

The New Yorker stares at the tan, stuccoed apartment building
for a few moments.

ANTHONY

We'd disguise ourselves at the
point of contact?

RIDGEMAN

There are ballistic masks and vests
in those garbage bags. Couple of
tear gas grenades too.

Anthony inhales deeply, ruminates for a moment, and exhales.

ANTHONY

I'm in until I'm not.

At present, the grim fellow reaches into his pocket and withdraws a white paper square. This page he unfolds until the noticeably asymmetrical face of an unhappy, pockmarked, and bald fellow stares up at the duo.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Pieter Dmetrovic?

RIDGEMAN
Yep.

ANTHONY
He looks cast iron.

RIDGEMAN
He is.

Anthony claims the photograph from Ridgeman and inspects Dmetrovic's face more closely.

ANTHONY
Any idea if his merchandise is in
six thirty-three?

RIDGEMAN
No idea. Once we confirm that he's
here, we'll tail him and learn his
itinerary.

The New Yorker sets the picture in a dashboard nook.

ANTHONY
Got a time frame?

RIDGEMAN
My contact said that Dmetrovic was
renting six thirty-three for two
weeks. This's day two of that
period.

ANTHONY
Know anything else about him?
Vehicle, associates?

RIDGEMAN
We're looking for those now.
Camera?

Anthony reaches into the side panel and withdraws a soft leather pouch. From this bag he removes the body of a digital camera and a telephoto lens, which is twelve inches long and five in diameter. Into the housing, the New Yorker fits the heavy optic. Tabs CLICK into place.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Take a nap.

The grim fellow claims the camera.

ANTHONY

Gladly. And don't forget to ask me
if I'm still in when I wake up.

Anthony exits the driver's seat and relocates himself into the back while Ridgeman sets the camera upon the dashboard and covers it with his jacket. Only the foremost glass of the lens and the digital screen at the opposite end are visible.

The New Yorker rests his head on the pillow as the grim fellow powers on the camera. Upon the three-inch screen is a magnified image of the tan, stuccoed facade.

INT. ANTHONY'S BLACK SEDAN - 8:04 AM

Two hours have passed. A hunk of sunlight shines upon the blanket-covered face of Anthony, who sleeps in the back of the black sedan while in the passenger's seat, Ridgeman eyes the three-inch camera monitor. Upon the screen is the image of the parking lot that adjoins the tan, stuccoed building. Pixels convey a variegated assortment of automobiles.

A green hybrid drives up 19th Street, and the grim fellow watches this vehicle with his naked eye. The car then turns into the monitored parking lot.

Ridgeman looks at the camera display as the green hybrid slides between two other automobiles. His right index finger TAPS the screen and tightens the image. Through the glass of an intervening sports utility vehicle, the grim fellow sees the movements of a blurry FIGURE.

Again, Ridgeman tightens the image. From behind the automobile strides a REDHEADED MAN who holds a grocery bag.

The grim fellow zooms out until the monitor image encompasses the entire parking lot. His right hand withdraws a spiral notebook from the glove compartment and thumbs the button of a ballpoint pen. Upon a fresh sheet of paper, he writes, 'Vehicle type,' then '# of Occupants,' and then 'Description'. Below these headings, he writes, 'green hybrid; 1; male, white, redhead, mid 30s, 5' 11".'

INT. ANTHONY'S BLACK SEDAN - 11:12

Three and a half more hours have passed. A YAWN tears across the face of Ridgeman, who looks at the camera monitor while holding the pen and spiral notebook. Eleven other vehicles and twice as many people have been added to the list.

In the grocery store parking lot, a RUMBLING pickup truck HONKS at a car. This sound awakens Anthony, who is sprawled across the backseat. Sitting upright, the New Yorker blearily eyes the dashboard clock, which reads 11:13.

ANTHONY

I've been processing air for five
hours?

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
(he rubs his eyes)
You should've given me a nudge.

RIDGEMAN
There wasn't a reason to.
(he glances back)
You're still in?

ANTHONY
Until I'm not. You've see Dmetrovic
yet?

RIDGEMAN
Nope.

Anthony sees the notebook that lies upon Ridgeman's lap,
looks around, and eyes the orange grocery store.

ANTHONY
I'm gonna grab something from this
big orange thing. You want egg
salad on rye toast?

RIDGEMAN
Two of them. And root beer.

The grim fellow withdraws a twenty from his wallet; the New
Yorker claims the bill and departs.

INT. ANTHONY'S BLACK SEDAN - 1:20

Two more hours have passed, and the black sedan's windows
have been lowered three inches. Ridgeman sits in the
passenger's seat next to Anthony, who CRUMPLES white paper as
he puts the final piece of a sandwich into his mouth.

RIDGEMAN
Amen.

CHEWING, the New Yorker throws a look at the grim fellow.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
I've been smelling and listening to
that for ninety-eight minutes.

Bread CRACKLES as Anthony CHEWS his final bite. At present,
he swallows and wipes his fingers with a napkin.

ANTHONY
The best part of a stakeout--other
than when it ends--is when you're
eating.

RIDGEMAN
A single red ant would've eaten it
faster.

A vehicle flashes onto 19th Street and garners the attentions of both Ridgeman and Anthony. This blue sports car slows down and enters the parking lot of the tan, stuccoed building.

The partners eye the camera monitor for a closer view as the new arrival cuts into an open space. Taillights flash and darken, and the driver's door opens. A bald head rises from the car, and both watchers lean forward with keen interest.

Anthony TAPS the display, which tightens the image. The driver turns toward the camera as he closes his car door. This fellow is a MUSTACHED ASIAN.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

Nope.

Disappointed, both men lean back in their seats. The grim fellow makes notes in his pad regarding the latest arrival. Twenty-two vehicles currently comprise the catalogue.

Ridgeman sets his ballpoint pen upon the console, raises the central armrest, and withdraws a RATTLING tin of breath mints, which he then opens and offers to Anthony.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

Take two.

ANTHONY

I'm still enjoying the aftertaste.

RIDGEMAN

Not all of us are.

INT. ANTHONY'S BLACK SEDAN - LATE DAY

Five more hours have passed, and the sinking, late-day sun throws long shadows across Bulwark. Ridgeman drowns in the passenger seat of the sedan while Anthony eyes the young BLACK WOMAN who is currently moving pixels across his monitor. The log has forty-seven vehicle entries, and the New Yorker is currently writing down the forty-eighth.

ANTHONY

This sister looks like a 'C' cup, wouldn't you say?

The grim fellow does not open his eyes.

RIDGEMAN

Stick to race, hair color, age, and height.

The New Yorker writes '5' 8"' upon the notebook and glances at the setting sun.

ANTHONY

I've got dinner plans with Denise.

RIDGEMAN
Okay. You're still in?

ANTHONY
I am until I'm not.

RIDGEMAN
I'll pick you up tomorrow in the
gray lady.

Anthony twists the key, and the engine RUMBLES.

EXT. PARKING LOT / CHECKS CASHED 4 U - DUSK

The sun is gone, but the violescent sky glows with its memory. Two workers who are in their thirties and dressed in dirty, paint-spattered denim overalls exit Checks Cashd 4 U and step onto the raised sidewalk. One of them is SMITH, a stocky white fellow, and the other is JUAN, a tall Mexican. The former stuffs a roll of bills into his pocket and looks back and forth across the darkening lot.

SMITH
Where'd you park?

JUAN
I've been telling you you're
getting senile.

Juan points out a weathered brown sedan, which is parked eighty feet away and next to a concrete island that has two crooked trees. The work buddies start toward the car.

JUAN (CONT'D)
Do lots of people in your family
get Alzheimer's?

SMITH
No. Nobody.

The workers pass some empty spaces, a motorcycle, a few more vacancies, a pickup truck, a cargo van, and a blue car. A thought occurs to Smith.

SMITH (CONT'D)
Maybe my grandmother.

JUAN
Can't remember?

SMITH
It was like forever ago.

Juan shakes his head solemnly as he and Smith reach the brown car. There, the white fellow opens the passenger door.

JUAN
You didn't lock it?

SMITH

I forg-
 (he stops himself)
I was thinking about something else
at the time. Sorry.

INT. JUAN'S BROWN SEDAN - SAME

The two workers climb into the messy vehicle and shut their doors. Juan slots a key in the ignition, and Smith SCRATCHES his backside. Between the two men sits a black duffel bag.

JUAN

This's your duffel?

SMITH

I don't think s-

A dark figure rises from the backseat. Startled, Smith and Juan turn around and see the Robber, who is wearing a black sweat suit, a matching ski mask, gray gloves, and blue goggles over his eyes. A silencer-fitted gun points at each worker's forehead.

ROBBER

Face the windshield.

Terrified, the workers turn around and face the windshield.

ROBBER (CONT'D)

Put on your seat belts and lock the
doors.

With trembling hands, the workers pull straps across their chests and slot buckles, which CLICK into place. Each man fists a door lock.

ROBBER (CONT'D)

Paco. Put up that sun shade, por
favor.

Juan leans forward and claims the foil-covered sun shade, which he then unfolds and places behind the windshield.

ROBBER (CONT'D)

Empty your pockets. Put everything
in that duffel bag or you'll be
painting houses in Heaven.

SMITH

Don't hurt u-

ROBBER

You've got five seconds.

Each man digs into his right pocket and withdraws the thick roll of twenty-dollar bills that he just acquired at 'Checks Cashed 4 U'.

ROBBER (CONT'D)

Four...

This money is dropped into the duffel bag. Wallets, JINGLING keys, a joint, a bubble gum pack, and a takeout menu are withdrawn by the workers and added to the collection.

ROBBER (CONT'D)

Three...

JUAN

That's all I've got.

SMITH

Me too. Swear to God.

ROBBER

Show me your pocket whites.

The workers dig deep and pull out the white insides of their pockets. Nothing but lint remains.

SMITH

See?

JUAN

Please just take your-

Gun muzzles flash. Heads jerk forward, and brain matter SMACKS the sun shade. Seatbelts SNAP taut and then pull the dead men back into sitting positions.

The Robber covers Smith's gory skull with a yellow construction worker's helmet and then sets a sombrero over Juan's head. At present, the criminal claims the black duffel bag, surveys the lot, and exits the car.

EXT. PARKING LOT / CHECKS CASHED 4 U - SAME

The Robber shuts the door and walks past a red sports car in which lies a dead man whose face is also covered by a hat. At present, the criminal enters a white hatchback and starts to remove his blue goggles.

INT. THIRD LEVEL / PARTIALLY BUILT PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Distant street lights illuminate the row of billowing tarpaulins that cover the unfinished north side of the parking garage. Departing from the white hatchback, the Robber replaces his blue goggles over his eyes. The black duffel bag is slung over his left shoulder, and his right hand is tucked into the corresponding pocket of his sweatpants. His FOOTFALLS echo in all directions.

Fifty feet away, smoking a cigarette, and listening to a cellular phone stands BEHZAD, a handsome Arabic fellow of thirty who wears a beige linen suit. His left shoulder leans against the side of a long, white cargo van.

BEHZAD
It is nice to see-

ROBBER
Shut off that phone.

BEHZAD
(in Arabic)
I have to go.
(he listens)
Yes. Bye.

The Arabic fellow pockets his cellphone as the Robber approaches. Eyes make appraisals behind blue goggles.

BEHZAD (CONT'D)
I expect that-

The Robber withdraws a silencer-fitted semiautomatic, and Behzad smirks. Twice, the muzzle flashes. These shots CLACK against the windshield of the white cargo van, but do not penetrate the glass, which is bulletproof. The criminal aims his weapon at a lower target.

BEHZAD (CONT'D)
You will find that th-

Thrice more, the muzzle flashes. Bullets SMACK against the front tires, but cause no damage.

BEHZAD (CONT'D)
Let me show you-

Leaning forward, the Arabic fellow peels off a sidewall. Within the tire lies a weight-bearing honeycomb polymer.

BEHZAD (CONT'D)
Airless.

Eyes glint behind the blue goggles.

BEHZAD (CONT'D)
Please allow me to show you the interior...

The Robber aims his gun at Behzad.

ROBBER
If anything moves in there--a rat,
a mouse, a baby mosquito--you'll
get to ring Allah's doorbell.

Unconcerned, the Arabic fellow smiles and slides the side door across its runner. The interior of the white cargo van is empty, and all of its walls are lined with thick plates of stainless steel.

The Robber watches over his gun as Behzad enters the vehicle, grabs a small knob, and pushes. This action opens a narrow horizontal panel in the far (driver's side) wall.

The Arabic fellow mimics the shape of a gun with his index finger and thumb and aims this digital firearm through the open slit.

ROBBER (CONT'D)
Pop the hood.

Behzad walks to the driver's seat, leans over, and pulls a latch, which POPS the hood.

The Robber strides to the front of the van and raises the heavy flap. Thick sheets of iron surround the engine.

The Arabic fellow exits the vehicle, and the criminal lets gravity SLAM the hood.

BEHZAD
All is as expected?

The Robber unslings his black duffel, which he then sets on the floor and shoves with his boot. Fabric SCRATCHES concrete until the bag bumps into Behzad's loafers.

The Arabic fellow leans over, UNZIPS the bag, and surveys the interior, wherein lies a sizable, but motley assortment of twenty, fifty, and one hundred dollar bills. Some small portion of this money is stained red.

ROBBER
The blood is gratis.
(he extends his left hand)
Keys.

Behzad tosses a ring that has two sets of keys, and the Robber snatches the JINGLING metal from the air.

ROBBER (CONT'D)
Be out of this garage in two minutes.

INT. DINING ROOM / DENISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Beneath a hanging lamp and at a small dining room table sit Anthony (who currently wears a t-shirt and jeans) and DENISE, a twenty-nine year-old black woman in a floral dress who has short hair, a dimpled chin, hoop earrings, and big eyes.

DENISE
Did you guys beat up any minorities today?

ANTHONY
That's only when we're on the clock.
(he points to his empty dish)
This was really delicious.

DENISE
Glad you liked it. And should I
infer from your reticence that
this's one of those times that you
can't talk about your work?

ANTHONY
Please infer from my reticence.

DENISE
Even though you've been suspended
and are--technically--a civilian.

ANTHONY
Criminals don't stop doing what
they do just because two cops get
benched. And we don't do what we do
just for a paycheck.

A suspicious look comes to Denise's face.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
What?

DENISE
Don't try to bluff somebody who's
smarter than you are.

Uncomfortably, the New Yorker plays with his fork.

DENISE (CONT'D)
Smarter by a yardstick.

ANTHONY
Did you see I brought cannolis from
Fiorenzo's?

DENISE
Don't do anything that might
jeopardize your career. Please.

ANTHONY
I won't.

Denise looks more concerned than convinced by this answer.

INT. BEDROOM / APARTMENT 435 - LATER

Dishevelled and tired, Ridgeman walks into his bedroom, where
steam, soft white light, and the sound of a HISSING shower
emerge from the partially open doorway.

MELANIE (O.S.)
Brett? That's you?

RIDGEMAN
Confirmed.

MELANIE (O.S.)
Look in the closet. I got you
something.

The grim fellow trudges across the carpet, stops in front of a closet, and slides the panel aside. Hanging from the bar within is a new black windbreaker.

MELANIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Try it on.

RIDGEMAN
Everything you buy for me fits
perfect.

Ridgeman lies on the mattress, closes his eyes, and listens to the shower HISS.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Thanks for getting it.

MELANIE (O.S.)
Thank me in bed.

The grim fellow is already asleep.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - TWILIGHT

The gray sedan sits at the north fence in the rear parking lot of the Quality Value Grocery. Wearing blue jeans and a black sweater, Anthony stares in a preoccupied manner at the magenta sky while Ridgeman runs a finger down the handwritten list of vehicles and occupants. His new black windbreaker covers most of the camera, which lies upon the dashboard, and the sleeves of his long sleeve gray shirt are pushed up.

RIDGEMAN
Seven aren't accounted for. If
Demetrovic is in the tan stucco--
and owns a vehicle--one of them is
his.

Absently, the New Yorker nods his head. This distracted behavior is noticed by the grim fellow.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
You're still in?

ANTHONY
At the outermost edge.

The grim fellow throws a questioning look at the New Yorker.

RIDGEMAN
Denise?

ANTHONY
She guessed that something wasn't
right.

For a few heavy seconds, Ridgeman appraises Anthony.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
I didn't say anything.

The grim fellow eyes his partner for a lingering moment and then returns his attention to the camera monitor.

RIDGEMAN
So?

ANTHONY
I picked up the engagement ring.

RIDGEMAN
From Feinbaum?

ANTHONY
Yeah....got it the day we busted Vasquez. The timing wasn't great, but I was gonna propose anyways. I didn't want some stupid work bullshit to interfere with my private life. But turned out she was in a bad mood that night from some drama at her job, and I didn't do it. And then yesterday, you bring me here--suggest this thing--
(he gestures at the stuccoed building)
--and I'm sort of okay with the idea, us taking money from some fuckhead dealer if our risk isn't too great, but when I see Denise that night--even before she suspects anything--I know that I can't propose to her until this thing is done. I evade her questions at dinner, and for the first time since I went to the jeweler, I'm not certain that she'd say 'yes' if I proposed.

Both men watch the tan, stuccoed building for a period of time. Thick clouds move, and the magenta sky darkens.

RIDGEMAN
You're younger than I am and have more options. Request a new partner when we're back on duty, and you'll probably make sergeant some day.

ANTHONY
I don't want a new partner.

Decided, Ridgeman closes his spiral notebook.

RIDGEMAN
I'll take you home.

ANTHONY
I haven't made a decision. I'm just
pondering the-

RIDGEMAN
Bullshit.
(he reaches for the
ignition keys)
You're decided, even if you think
you aren't.

ANTHONY
I told you that I was good for
tonight, and I'm gonna finish out
the shift.

RIDGEMAN
I appreciate that, but you're not
obligated to-

ANTHONY
My word to you is an obligation.

Ridgeman appraises Anthony, whose face is stubbornly set.

RIDGEMAN
Thanks.

The grim fellow releases the key, reaches into his pocket,
and removes his weathered wallet.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Two egg salads. And I'll pay for
yours if it's not soppressata.

Seeing something, the New Yorker gestures at the road.

ANTHONY
Here's one.

A dark green sedan rolls up 19th Street and turns into the
parking lot of the tan, stuccoed building. The vehicle soon
claims a space in a far corner.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
That's guest parking.

Both men lean toward the camera monitor to get a better look.
From the dark green sedan emerge Biscuit and Henry Johns. The
slim fellow scans the parking lot as he and his stout
associate walk toward the tan, stuccoed building.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
These brothers've seen some stuff.

RIDGEMAN
They're tainted.

Reopening the notebook, the grim fellow withdraws his pen and
CLICKS the button.

ANTHONY

Think they're with Dmetrovic? His buyers?

RIDGEMAN

Twenty percent. Go betweeners or local muscle seem more likely.

Henry Johns opens the door of the tan, stuccoed building for Biscuit, who then scratches his left ear as he enters. The slim fellow looks around and follows his associate.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

And two root beers.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - 4:03 AM

More than nine hours have passed since the arrival of Biscuit and Henry Johns. Ridgeman sleeps in the backseat of the gray sedan while Anthony watches the camera display. A YAWN tears across the face of the New Yorker, who then drinks old coffee from an orange paper cup and grimaces.

Something flickers upon the screen. Anthony tightens the image and pans the telephoto lens to the right. The front door of the tan, stuccoed building fills the display and swings open.

From the lobby walk Biscuit and Henry Johns. One step behind them and in a brown suit strides the bald, pockmarked Russian, Dmetrovic. Held in each of his hands is a sizable black briefcase.

Anthony gapes at the sighted quarry. His heart THUDS, and he swallows dryly. The New Yorker turns away from the monitor and glances over his shoulder.

Supine and asleep upon the backseat bench is Ridgeman. Heavy exhalations come from the big man's open mouth.

Deliberating, the New Yorker returns his gaze to the monitor, which is currently empty. A TAPPING index finger widens the image to include the entire parking lot of the tan, stuccoed building. Biscuit, Henry Johns, and Dmetrovic calmly push pixels toward the dark green sedan. The stout black fellow scratches his left ear.

Anthony considers his obligations to his partner and his girlfriend. Amidst these ruminations floats the temptation of swiftly acquiring a lot of money by doing something very similar to what he has done for many years as a law enforcer.

The sounds of Ridgeman's BREATHING grows louder.

ANTHONY

(quietly)
Anchovies.

Decided, the New Yorker frowns.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Ridgeman.

The grim fellow awakens, sits upright, and rubs his eyes.

RIDGEMAN
Dmetrovic?

ANTHONY
Yeah. With the black dudes we saw
before.

Ridgeman exits the backseat, reenters behind the steering wheel, shuts the door, twists the ignition, flings the gear into reverse, and steps on the accelerator.

RUMBLING, the gray sedan retreats from the fence. The New Yorker disassembles the camera as the grim fellow cuts the wheel, shifts into drive, and drives past the big orange supermarket. A thick index finger punches on the headlights, which illuminate 18th Street.

Ridgeman dials the wheel counterclockwise, speeds onto the road, and straightens the gray sedan.

Anthony looks out of his side window. On the far side of a weedy lot lies a stretch of the parallel road. Car lights shine upon that street, which is 19th.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
They're going west.

RIDGEMAN
Good.

Ridgeman reaches the end of the block, corners underneath a blinking red light, and lands on an avenue. His boot lifts half an inch, and the vehicle decelerates. The partners watch the upcoming intersection, which is currently empty.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
You're sure he went-

The dark green sedan ZOOMS through the intersection.

Ridgeman stomps the gas pedal and speeds toward the cross street, where he and Anthony look to the west. The taillights of the dark green sedan are now four blocks away.

The grim fellow corners onto 19th Street and accelerates. Beneath the hood, the engine COUGHS twice and RUMBLES.

ANTHONY
The gray lady needs a decongestant.

Taillights shine as the green quarry reaches a blinking yellow signal. Ridgeman eases off the gas, and the gray sedan decelerates. The distance between the two vehicles diminishes from four blocks to three.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Don't give him a wedgie.

RIDGEMAN
Driving slower than this will get
us noticed.

The distance between the stopped green sedan and the approaching gray one diminishes to two blocks. Anthony squints as he looks at the silhouetted group.

ANTHONY
What're they doing in there?
Backgammon?

RIDGEMAN
Drive forward you stupid f-

The taillights of the green sedan darken, and the car rolls through the intersection. Ridgeman reapplies the gas and trails the other vehicle from a distance of two blocks.

ANTHONY
I don't know this area real well.
What's west?

RIDGEMAN
More of this. Then the turnpike and
a school district.

Eyes fixed on the leading vehicle, the partners ruminate.

ANTHONY
Probably not doing all this to
steal crayons.

A red sports car veers onto 19th Street and slides between the dark green sedan and its rolling gray shadow. The foremost vehicle precedes the other two under a flashing yellow light, a crosshatched array of telephone wires, and another blinking signal.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
That red toy gets a Christmas card
from us this year.

Helpfully shielded by the intervening sports car, the gray sedan trails the dark green one west along 19th Street. Ridgeman glances at Anthony.

RIDGEMAN
Feel like some construction work?

A look of surprise flashes upon the New Yorker's face.

ANTHONY
That's necessary right now?

RIDGEMAN
Five percent.

Reluctantly, Anthony leans forward, reaches under the passenger seat, and withdraws a heavy piece of hard luggage. His thumbs press latches, which CLICK open, and he raises the lid. Nestled within deep foam compartments are the disassembled components of a sniper rifle, two seven-shell magazines, and a telescopic site.

The New Yorker eyes the modern military weapon and returns his uneasy gaze to the grim fellow who grips the wheel.

ANTHONY

This's for shooting out tires,
sending warnings...things like
that, right?

RIDGEMAN

We're not going after a president.

Annoyed, Anthony shakes his head.

ANTHONY

I need a better answer than that.
Right now, we're in new territory--
a foggy gray landscape--and I know
all of my limits, though maybe not
yours.
So before I build a killing
instrument that I last used in the
Army, I wanna hear that you do not
plan to execute a human being to
facilitate a robbery.

RIDGEMAN

I'm not executing anybody.

Anthony appraises Ridgeman and believes his statement.

ANTHONY

That boundary's in steel-reinforced
concrete.

RIDGEMAN

Agreed. Now build.

The New Yorker withdraws a polymer rifle stock from the case as the grim fellow returns his full attention to the dark green sedan. Without signaling, the quarry corners sharply onto a northbound road.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

Crud.

Anthony looks up as Ridgeman dials the wheel clockwise and drives onto a parallel avenue.

ANTHONY

He's still going for the turnpike?

RIDGEMAN

Eighty-five percent.

The grim fellow STOMPS the gas, and the gray sedan RUMBLES up the empty residential street.

Anthony attaches the polymer stock to the firing assembly as Ridgeman drives through an intersection and glances to his left. One block over, the dark green sedan crosses the same street. Apartment buildings soon block the view.

The New Yorker SNAPS a bipod to an attachment plate as the grim fellow decelerates. Gradually, the distance between the two vehicles widens.

ANTHONY

Why're y-

RIDGEMAN

Next cross street's the turnpike.

The partners look forward and to the left as they near another intersection. One block west, the quarry turns.

ANTHONY

You're right.

Ridgeman stops at the intersection, where he and Anthony look west. Taillights shrink as the dark green sedan zooms up the turnpike ramp. The grim fellow eyes the TICKING second hand of his watch.

RIDGEMAN

One...two...three...four..

The grim fellow accelerates toward the quickly disappearing quarry. RUMBLING, the gray sedan passes underneath a blinking yellow light and angles onto the incline.

Anthony SNAPS a seven-cartridge magazine into the housing of the assembled sniper rifle as Ridgeman adjusts the wheel to the curving ramp. Concrete walls scroll past both sides of the vehicle for a quarter mile and then disappear. A charcoal sky opens up as the gray sedan emerges on the turnpike, which is a three-lane road that has a small amount of traffic.

Ridgeman and Anthony survey the vehicles, and the latter fellow sees something.

ANTHONY

Five cars ahead, in the carpool lane. In front of that black SUV.

The grim fellow accelerates, switches lanes, and creeps behind the black sports utility vehicle so that only one automobile separates the gray and dark green sedans.

RIDGEMAN

Don't let it catch a cold.

Anthony claims the black windbreaker that had previously covered the surveillance camera and clothes the sniper rifle.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Imminent sunrise brightens the sky on the east side of the turnpike. The positions of the gray sedan, the black SUV, and the dark green quarry have not changed during eighteen minutes of driving. Through the tinted windshield, Ridgeman and Anthony eye the visible hunks of the suspects' car.

ANTHONY

You think this transaction's happening today?

RIDGEMAN

This's business--two tainted black dudes and an out-of-town convict going for a drive at dawn--though it's probably just preliminary.

The New Yorker YAWNS and suddenly remembers something.

ANTHONY

Dmetrovic was carrying two black briefcases when he got in.

The grim fellow raises an eyebrow.

RIDGEMAN

Anything else you forgot to tell me?

ANTHONY

No.

RIDGEMAN

You sure? Might've been something subtle--like if one of the black dudes had a bazooka.

ANTHONY

Hey. I'd been up for hours, listening to you process air. It escaped me.

RIDGEMAN

Fine.

Ridgeman considers the oversight for another moment and then relinquishes his irritation.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

And I suppose you could've let me sleep through everything and been done with all this.

With misgivings, the New Yorker shakes his head.

ANTHONY

I definitely should have.

RIDGEMAN
Considering the briefcases, it's
seventy percent that this's the
transaction.

ANTHONY
What's the other thirty?

RIDGEMAN
Dmetrovic might be showing somebody
some money or a sample of his
merchandise, depending on which end
he's handling.

This answer does not better Anthony's mood.

ANTHONY
The briefcases were-

A SCREECH sounds up ahead.

RIDGEMAN
Wait.

Veering, the dark green sedan shoots down an off-ramp beneath
a sign that reads, 'Exit 93: Market Avenue'.

The black SUV HONKS, and the grim fellow stomps the brakes of
his vehicle. Tires SKID, and the automobile that follows
behind the gray sedan BEEPS.

Ridgeman slows his car and glances at the rearview mirror,
where he sees rising smoke and an ANGRY MOTHER in a yellow
station wagon who is TOOTING her horn and yelling inaudibly
while her SON covers his ears. To the northwest, the dark
green sedan disappears around the bend of the off-ramp.

The grim fellow cuts the wheel, steps on the accelerator, and
exits the turnpike. Concrete walls enclose the careening car.

ANTHONY
This transaction's in the financial
district?

Ruminating, Ridgeman considers the situation. No reply comes
from the compressed line that is his mouth.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Isn't this a particularly bad area
for an illicit rendezvous?

RIDGEMAN
It is.

A blinking red light shines at the end of the ramp, and the
grim fellow slows down the gray sedan.

ANTHONY
What's going on here?

Ridgeman stops the car and looks to the left and to the right. In the latter direction is the diminishing rump of the dark green sedan. The grim fellow dials the wheel clockwise and drives east after his quarry.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Any ideas?

RIDGEMAN
I'm trying to flush the ideas I've got, 'cause none of them fit this.

Commercial buildings and skyscrapers line both sides of the four lane road. Three blocks and a score of automobiles separate the gray stalker and its green quarry.

Anthony eyes the surrounding edifices. Almost all of the windows in these buildings are dark. At the corner of a big intersection, an old VENDOR sets up a metal trailer that will soon sell coffee and donuts to people with neckties.

Ridgeman monitors the dark green sedan, which is currently braking for a red light. The grim fellow slows his car and steers behind a city bus in order to remain unobserved.

For a moment, the partners consider the puzzling situation. The distant light changes, and the suspects' vehicle rolls through the intersection. RUMBLING, the gray stalker follows.

The left taillight blinks upon the dark green sedan, which then switches into the southernmost lane.

ANTHONY
They're getting more considerate.

Ridgeman slows his car as his quarry turns toward a parking garage entrance.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION - SAME

Taillights shine as the dark green sedan stops. Henry Johns emerges from the passenger's seat and pulls aside a chain that bars the entrance. Admitted, the car rolls forward.

The slim fellow then pulls the chain across the opening and slinks into the vanishing automobile. Upon the links hangs a sign that says, 'Closed'.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Inside of the slow-moving gray sedan, Ridgeman and Anthony raise their gazes from the departing quarry and inspect the five-story parking garage. Billowing tarpaulins fill the open spaces of its three upper levels, and metal scaffolding clings to the facade.

RIDGEMAN
It's still under construction.

ANTHONY

Do you want me to mail or hand
deliver your Genius Award?

Ridgeman drives past the incomplete structure, makes a U-turn, backtracks, sees a space, makes a second U-turn, slows his car, and cuts the wheel to the right. One block west of the parking garage and on the opposite side of Market Avenue, the grim fellow parks his gray lady.

Anthony looks through his side window. The vehicle is currently parked in front of a restaurant that is named, 'The Platinum Dish.'

RIDGEMAN

Doesn't look like the kind that's
open for breakfast.

Ridgeman reaches into the side pocket of his door and withdraws a baseball hat, which he then dons atop his silver-brown hair. Sunglasses are unfolded and placed over his eyes.

ANTHONY

Nice. Real stylish.

RIDGEMAN

You're saying this before you use
your gay hair shit?

ANTHONY

I can't say it after.

Anthony withdraws a can of 'Instant Hair Color', and Ridgeman lowers his window five inches for some ventilation.

The New Yorker closes his eyes and holds a paper bag over his face. His right index finger presses the nozzle, which sprays coloring upon his slicked-back black hair. Dark locks begin to lighten. Aerosol HISSES.

During this cosmetic enterprise, the grim fellow surveys the parking garage. The first and second floors appear to be completed, but the upper three stories are unfinished, covered by tarpaulins, and even skeletal in places. No vehicles are currently visible.

Mostly blond, Anthony CRUMPLES up the dripping paper bag and withdraws from a folding case a fashionable pair of black-rimmed prescription glasses.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Time for a walk by?

Ridgeman glances at the dashboard clock, which reads, 6:19.

RIDGEMAN

Six forty-five is the time.

ANTHONY

Why's that?

RIDGEMAN

The nearest, most likely meet up time is six thirty, and we should give the other party some room for tardiness.

ANTHONY

Unless Dmetrovic is nineteen minutes late.

RIDGEMAN

That's possible, but not probable. And I'll do the walk by myself.

ANTHONY

I usually-

RIDGEMAN

You're just barely here as it is. Any and every bigger risk that we come upon is mine to take.

INT. THIRD LEVEL / PARKING GARAGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION - SAME

Henry Johns walks to the back of the dark green sedan, which is parked next to two white hatchbacks. His sleepy eyes survey the area. Several spaces away and sitting in shadow is the white cargo van. Towards this bulletproof vehicle, Dmetrovic carries his black briefcases.

A latch CLICKS, and Henry Johns opens the trunk of the dark green sedan. Inside lies a cardboard box that contains three steel nozzles, assorted beige and opal paint jars, four coiled siphons, a vial of putty, and a tank that is labelled, 'New Looks Airbrush Compressor.' The slim fellow appraises the equipment.

Biscuit emerges from the driver's seat, eyes Dmetrovic, and approaches Henry Johns.

BISCUIT

I'll do you first.

HENRY JOHNS

Don't make no mess of it.

BISCUIT

I used to graffiti back in the day.

HENRY JOHNS

And I remember what it look like.

Sourly, Biscuit wrinkles his mouth.

BISCUIT

You weren't any better yourself.

HENRY JOHNS

I was only doin' tags--you was the
one tryin' to make 'art'.
Nigga painted a pitbull everybody
thought was a turtle.

Something CLACKS and garners the gazes of the two black friends. Seventy feet away and directly in front of Dmetrovic, the side door of the white cargo van slides open.

DMETROVIC

Good morning.

The pockmarked Russian enters the dark interior of the bulletproof vehicle and is absorbed by shadows.

EXT. MARKET AVENUE / PARKING GARAGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION - 7:45

Wearing the black windbreaker, baseball cap, and sunglasses, Ridgeman departs the gray sedan, crosses Market Avenue, and proceeds just behind an OLD PEDESTRIAN toward the unfinished parking garage. Fifty feet ahead of him and to the left looms the chained entrance.

Walking near the oldster, the grim fellow reaches the opening and glances inside. The visible part of the ground floor level is completely empty.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Anthony scoots into the passenger seat as Ridgeman reenters the gray sedan and shuts the door. Eyeing the inscrutable parking garage, the grim fellow peels off his black windbreaker, which he then drapes over the sniper rifle.

RIDGEMAN

Nothing.

ANTHONY

How about getting on a nearby roof
for a better vantage?

RIDGEMAN

I don't think it's worth the
exposure...or the risk of us
getting split up if things get
urgent.

For a moment, both men monitor the parking garage.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

This's a bad location for-

Seeing something, the grim fellow stops himself. Headlights and taillights flash within the dark parking garage. At present, the white cargo van rolls out of the entrance.

Sitting in the shadowed driver's seat of this vehicle is a stout white DRIVER who is dressed in a teal uniform and a matching hat. Patches with the letters 'N.S.S.' are sewn onto his clothing. The PASSENGER in this vehicle is a lean Caucasian who wears the same teal uniform. This latter fellow emerges from the automobile and pulls aside the chain.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Who the hell're these guys?

One block away, the Driver accelerates to the curb, while his associate replaces the links and returns to the vehicle.

ANTHONY
Must've been here since before
Dmetrovic arrived.

The Passenger SLAMS his door and says something to the Driver. The stout man behind the wheel nods his head and then scratches his left ear.

Stunned, Anthony stares at the Driver.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
It's them.

Confused, Ridgeman looks at his partner.

RIDGEMAN
Who?

ANTHONY
The black dudes. The ones who drove
Dmetrovic.

Withholding insults, Ridgeman eyes the uniformed Caucasians who occupy the front of the cargo van that sits at the far end of the block. The unlikely theory proffered by Anthony starts to seem possible.

RIDGEMAN
You might be right.

The white cargo van surges forward and turns left on Market Avenue. Upon the passenger's side of the vehicle is a teal company logo, 'Nationwide Security Services'.

Ridgeman twists the key, ignites the engine, and yanks the gear. His side mirror shows the growing grille of an oncoming fourteen wheeler.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Crud.

The RATTLING truck ZOOMS past. Jaw clenched, the grim fellow presses the gas pedal. The gray sedan RUMBLES from the curb and joins the eastbound traffic of Market Avenue.

Anthony cranes his neck and sees the white cargo van, which is currently three blocks away.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

Do you-

ANTHONY

In front of that bus.

The grim fellow maneuvers toward an open stretch so that he can close the gap. A traffic light that is three blocks away changes to yellow, and the white cargo van sails through the intersection a moment before the signal turns red.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Anchovies.

The nearest light glares red, and the beige two seater that is directly in front of the gray sedan stops.

RIDGEMAN

Crud.

Unable to do otherwise, Ridgeman brakes. Northbound traffic rushes up the crossroad, and the white cargo van disappears from view.

ANTHONY

Any idea what's going on here?

RIDGEMAN

Evidently this group expects to be exposed to people or cameras at some point--that's the only way those disguises make sense.

Obscuring traffic continues to rush across Market Avenue.

ANTHONY

For what kind of job?
Kidnapping...? Robbery? Murder?

RIDGEMAN

One or some of those.

EXT. BUS STOP AT LITTLE STREET & FIRMAMENT AVENUE - 8:15 AM

The morning sun throws horizontal light upon the seven COMMUTERS who stand at a bus stop. One of these individuals is KELLY SUMMER, a round-faced, petite blonde of thirty-one years who wears a long black coat over her light blue pants suit. This very preoccupied woman stares blankly at the ground with red, glassy eyes.

A GURGLING engine sounds. The people around Kelly Summer fidget and contemplate the existence of a formal line. Individuals gesture and pivot in a nonsensical dance, while the preoccupied blonde stares at her shadow. Her long-fingered hands gently rub her flat stomach.

The bus stops, SQUEAKS, and yields flatulence. Its door collapses like an accordion in front of the motley group.

An old woman climbs the stairs and enters the vehicle. Commuters take one step forward as does the melancholic final person, Kelly Summer.

A young black fellow who wears headphones climbs into the bus. Again, the line and its preoccupied terminus advance.

A Mexican mother and father escort their GIGGLING daughter up three stairs and deeper into the bus. Tears sparkle in Kelly Summer's eyes as she nears the entrance.

A stout man who is dressed like a bellhop climbs into the bus. At present, the petite blonde reaches the threshold. A glimmering tear drips down her face, which she then wipes dry with the sleeve of her coat.

The penultimate passenger angles into the vehicle, and the heavyset, mustached BUS DRIVER looks down at Kelly Summer, who stands frozen at the threshold.

BUS DRIVER

Ma'am?

Reluctantly, the petite blonde places a high-heeled loafer inside of the vehicle.

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

Do you need some assistance?

Kelly Summer shakes her head, grips the railing, and climbs up to the second step. A tiny SOB escapes from her mouth as she turns around and hops down to the sidewalk.

KELLY SUMMER

Sorry!

The petite blonde runs east as the Bus Driver shuts the door and drives west.

INT. BABY BLUE ELEVATOR / APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Inside of a carpeted, pea green elevator, Kelly Summer jams an index finger into the '5' button, which then illuminates. The door starts to close. To the lone occupant, the progress of this sliding panel seems uncommonly slow.

KELLY SUMMER

C'mon. C-

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Can you hold that?

Kelly Summer fingers the '5' and the 'Door Close' buttons with the speed of virtuoso saxophonist. A shadow flickers outside of the sliding panel.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Please hold th-

The door shuts, and the petite blonde exhales. Blue-green eyes shine with tears once again, but these are of joy rather than sadness. Her left hand digs into her purse and withdraws a set of JINGLING keys as the lift rises.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR HALLWAY / APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

Wiping dripping eyes and SNIFFLING, Kelly Summer emerges from the elevator and hastens up the fifth floor hallway. Her heavy footfalls THUD upon the carpet and rattle fixtures.

Outside of apartment 514, the petite blonde stops, inserts a key, and twists her hand. A bolt SNAPS. Turning the knob, she pushes forward. The door retreats from the jamb, and a RATTLING security chain CLANKS across the opening. Her entrance is barred.

Surprised, Kelly Summer stares at the taut steel links.

KELLY SUMMER

Jeffrey!

There is no answer to this solicitation.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)

Jeffrey! Let me in!

The petite blonde listens for a response, but hears only the respirations that come from her chest. Twice more she POUNDS on the door.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)

Open this-

JEFFREY (O.S.)

Kelly. Please stop yelling. I was in the bathroom.

KELLY SUMMER

Why'd you put the chain on the door?

FOOTFALLS sound in the apartment, and a floorboard CREAKS.

JEFFREY (O.S.)

Why aren't you on your way to work?

KELLY SUMMER

You're not allowed to answer a question with a question!

JEFFREY (O.S.)

Don't shout at me, okay? You need to go downstairs, get on the bus, and-

Kelly Summer POUNDS a fist against the door.

KELLY SUMMER
Open this right now!

JEFFREY (O.S.)
I can't.

Fury and disbelief flash upon the face of the petite blonde.

KELLY SUMMER
What do you mean you 'can't'? Of course you-

JEFFREY (O.S.)
I want to--I really, really do--but I can't.
Your maternity leave ended four weeks ago, and you used up all of your vacation days and every single sick day staying here with Jackson.

KELLY SUMMER
He needed me!

JEFFREY (O.S.)
I'm taking good care of him now and will continue to do so until you get home from work.

KELLY SUMMER
I hate you!

JEFFREY (O.S.)
And I love you twice as much.

Frustrated, Kelly Summer GRUNTS, balls her fists, contemplates knocking down the entire door, shakes her head, and GRUNTS again.

JEFFREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You need to go back to work, back to the bank. Today. Now.
We've discussed this before and you know I'm right.

Tears fill the petite blonde's blue-green eyes.

KELLY SUMMER
But...but my job's so stupid...
I go there and sell chunks of my life for a paycheck so rich people I don't even know can put money into places I've never even seen.
(she wipes her eyes)
How can I sit at a stupid desk and talk about bank accounts when my baby's here?

FOOTFALLS sound on the other side of the door, and through the narrow opening Kelly Summer sees a vertical slice of the amiable, scruffy hipster of twenty-nine who is named JEFFREY.

JEFFREY

Hey there.

Suddenly, the petite blonde is embarrassed by her actions.

KELLY SUMMER

Hi.

JEFFREY

Jackson needs diapers and clothes and gourmet baby food. Eventually, he'll need school supplies, and if he's anything like me and my brothers, he'll need braces.

Kelly Summer SNIFFLES and wipes her eyes.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

All these things cost money. And you make a lot more than I do.

KELLY SUMMER

I know.

JEFFREY

Please get on the bus and go to work.

KELLY SUMMER

Okay.

(she SNIFFLES)

Sorry I said 'I hate you'.

JEFFREY

I know what you really meant.

KELLY SUMMER

Can I see him, though? Through the opening...?

It is clear that Jeffrey does not think this is a good idea.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)

I promise I'll go if you let me see him. Just for a second.

The hipster disappears. FOOTFALLS recede, stop, and return.

Kelly Summer looks through the two-inch opening. Cradled in Jeffrey's arms is the swaddled, four-month-old baby, JACKSON. The chubby infant gapes at his mother with confused blue-green eyes.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)

I need to touch him.

JEFFREY

Kelly. Please d-

KELLY SUMMER
Just for a second. Then I'll go. I
swear to God.

JEFFREY
You've broken that swear before.
And recently.

KELLY SUMMER
But I-

JEFFREY
Swear on the life of our child that
you will leave after you've touched
him.

Uneasy with this proposition, Kelly Summer reluctantly nods
her head 'yes.' Jeffrey then shakes his head 'no'.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
You have to say it aloud for it to
count. That's how swears work.

KELLY SUMMER
I swear on the life of my child
that I will go to work after I've
touched him.

Jeffrey extracts Jackson's right leg from the blanket and
slides the limb through the door opening. Kelly Summer
removes a blue bootie and kisses the infant's tiny toes,
which wriggle.

The extruding limb is gently withdrawn by the hipster.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)
But-

JEFFREY
You swore on his life.

Kelly Summer finds her resolve, clears her throat, and rights
her posture as if she is about to give a speech.

KELLY SUMMER
I'll see both of you when I get
home from work!

Jeffrey waves Jackson's right hand.

JEFFREY
We love you.

KELLY SUMMER
I love you too. Both of you.

The hipster closes the door, which THUDS against the jamb.

Resolute, the petite blonde wipes her eyes and hastens up the hallway to the elevator, where she stops and fingers the call button. Dangling from her clenched right hand is the blue bootie that she removed from her child only moments ago.

Kelly Summer turns her head, looks back at the door of her apartment, and thinks about Jackson. A chime DINGS. Startled, the petite blonde pockets the bootie and enters the elevator.

INT. CITY BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Kelly Summer grips a steel pole inside of a RUMBLING city bus that currently carries its PASSENGERS west along Firmament Avenue. With a bittersweet grin, the young mother withdraws the bootie from her coat and fondles the blue fabric.

KELLY SUMMER

So cute!

EXT. BUS STOP AT APEX & FIRMAMENT AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

The door of the bus opens. Three Passengers climb down the steps and are succeeded by Kelly Summer, whose high-heeled loafers soon impact the concrete.

The petite blonde looks across the street. There stands a large, one-story building that is made of stone, marble, and wood. 'Trusted Bank of North Bulwark' is written in burgundy letters upon its facade.

Across the avenue and along the sidewalk strides Kelly Summer. Her legs carry her toward her place of work while her thoughts travel in the exact opposite direction. Tears sparkle anew in her eyes.

Twenty feet from the bank, the petite blonde stops walking. Her breath catches, and her lower lip trembles. Turning her head, she eyes the nearby bus stop.

KELLY SUMMER

(muttered to herself)

You swore on his life.

(clenching her fists)

Be brave.

Decided, Kelly Summer again faces the bank and walks toward its entrance.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)

Only eight hours.

The petite blonde nears the double front doors and in them sees a reflection of herself. With this ersatz mirror, she fixes her hair and wipes her eyes.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)

Better.

Kelly Summer notices a piece of blue lint that sits upon her left lapel. This errant fiber she removes as a reflection of the white cargo van drifts across the glass.

INT. MAIN ROOM / TRUSTED BANK OF NORTH BULWARK - SAME

The front doors swing open. High-heeled loafers CLACK upon a marble floor as Kelly Summer enters the main room of the Trusted Bank of North Bulwark, which is currently occupied by a handful of EMPLOYEES and two CUSTOMERS. A mustached, white-haired MEXICAN SECURITY GUARD of sixty who wears a burgundy uniform waves at the petite blonde.

MEXICAN SECURITY GUARD
Welcome back, bonita.

KELLY SUMMER
Thanks. How're you? How's Felicia?

MEXICAN SECURITY GUARD
We're all good. Cheryl showed me pictures of your baby--he looks real cute.

DEEP MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Good heavens and praise be to Him!

Kelly Summer turns around and sees walking toward her from across the room MR. EDMINGTON, a heavyset fellow of forty-nine who has a polished demeanor, bright white hair, a whiter beard, and a shiny blue suit.

MR. EDMINGTON
Can that radiant vision of maternity who just stepped through the door possibly be our beloved Mrs. Summer?

KELLY SUMMER
It's me.

With a very serious smile, Mr. Edmington continues toward Kelly Summer.

MR. EDMINGTON
Welcome back. And congratulations to you for bringing such a lovely boy child into this world.

KELLY SUMMER
Thank you Mr. Edmington.

The manager reaches the prodigal employee and shakes her hand with a great warmth and an even greater gentleness.

MR. EDMINGTON
All of us at the bank expect great things from your boy. Wonderful things. On a global scale.

KELLY SUMMER

So do I.

MR. EDMINGTON

Then our hopes are aligned.

(he gestures to the left)

Over there you will see a token--a miniscule manifestation--of our affections--

The petite blonde looks in the indicated direction, where sit three desks. The first is occupied by WILLIAMS, a handsome black fellow of thirty in a checked blazer who is waving at his returning coworker, and the second accommodates CHERYL, an equally welcoming forty-five year-old redhead who has a magenta skirt suit, a bright smile, and bold eye makeup. The third desk is decorated with four large bouquets, two chocolate boxes, and six floating balloons, each of which proclaims 'Welcome Back' or 'Congratulations' with one to five exclamation points.

WILLIAMS

Welcome back.

CHERYL

Nice to see you!

KELLY SUMMER

You too. This's all so nice--the balloons and flowers and stuff.

MR. EDMINGTON

You're absence was weight upon us, and your return is a Heavenly blessing.

KELLY SUMMER

It was only three months.

MR. EDMINGTON

A dolorous era.

CHERYL

You really shouldn't look that good after having a baby.

KELLY SUMMER

Thanks!

CHERYL

It's kind of annoying how good you look.

KELLY SUMMER

Sorry. And thanks!

From a desk drawer, Cheryl withdraws a wide, flat box.

CHERYL

I made cupcakes.

KELLY SUMMER
Double chocolate?

CHERYL
Of course.
(whispered)
And we can call them muffins if you
wanna eat one for breakfast.

Through the double doors walks Henry Johns, disguised by Caucasian body paint, a ridge of putty on the bridge of his nose, dark sunglasses, a teal uniform, a matching N.S.S. cap, a brunette wig, and a padded belly. His mouth is tightly compressed in an imitation of a thin-lipped white guy.

This unnoticed fellow walks toward an ATM booth as Kelly Summer waves at a LATINA TELLER and approaches the decorated desk. Amidst the bouquets stands a large, framed picture of her baby Jackson.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
Your husband helped me arrange that
part.

Tears shine in the eyes of the petite blonde as she surveys the tableau and her coworkers.

KELLY SUMMER
Cheryl...Mr. Edmington...
everyone...thank you for this.
Really.

CHERYL
It's nice to have you back.

KELLY SUMMER
It was hard leaving the baby, but-

Tires THUD against a curb. Kelly Summer and Cheryl look toward the entrance. Beyond the glass double doors and upon the sidewalk is the white cargo van, which currently rolls in reverse at a forty-five degree angle to the building.

Mr. Edmington looks from the anomalous vehicle to the Mexican Security Guard.

MR. EDMINGTON
Are any deliveries scheduled for
today?

The white cargo van stops. Its sliding side door is aligned with the front entrance of the bank.

MEXICAN SECURITY GUARD
Not that-

Henry Johns jams a silencer-fitted pistol into the nape of the Mexican Security Guard. Three feet beyond the double doors, the white cargo van's side slides open.

HENRY JOHNS

Everyone listen! Hands up and keep them there or this man dies.

Kelly Summer, Cheryl, Mr. Edmington, the Mexican Security Guard, and the frightened remainder raise hands as three Robbers hasten from the van into the bank. These thieves aim silencer-fitted machine guns at the assemblage and wear jogging suits, ski masks, and blue goggles. (Dmetrovic has a charcoal-colored outfit, and the other two are clad entirely in black, excepting only the gray gloves that one wears.) Hanging from the neck of the Russian leader is the 1980s tape cassette player.

Henry Johns returns to the dark interior of the white cargo van, where he soon disappears from view.

Standing in the middle of the main room and flanked by the two Robbers, Dmetrovic hits the 'Play' button, which CLICKS.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE

Keep your hands raised. Cooperate.
If you make any sudden moves, you
will be executed. If the police
show up, everyone will be executed.

Tears sparkle in Kelly Summer's eyes as well as those of the Mexican Security Guard and the Latina Teller.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)

Do not prioritize money over having
a heartbeat. Do you understand?

Anxiously, the petite blonde nods her head. Cheryl, Mr. Edmington, the Mexican Security Guard, the Latina Teller, Williams, and everybody else give silent affirmations.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)

Mr. Edmington?

Startled, the manager looks at the tape player and then the Russian leader in gray who wears this device like a necklace.

MR. EDMINGTON

S-s-sir?

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE

Are there any employees in the
back? If so, get them right now.
You have twenty seconds.

Dmetrovic presses the 'Pause' button on the tape player.

MR. EDMINGTON

There aren't any people in the
back.

Again, the Russian leader activates the device.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE
Are you certain of this response?
You appear to be uncertain.

MR. EDMINGTON
I am absolutely certain.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE
We will accept this response. If
you are mistaken, your testicles
will be removed with this-

Dmetrovic pauses the tape player as the Gray-Gloved Robber withdraws an eight-inch survival knife from a leather sheath. Light plays upon ugly serrated edges.

Mr. Edmington shoves down his terror and finds his voice.

MR. EDMINGTON
Please. Don't be rash. Every person
in the bank is out here. We were
just celebr-

The Russian leader puts an admonishing index finger to his mouth and reactivates the tape player.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE
You!

Dmetrovic points at Kelly Summer, who then pales.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)
You seem honest and obedient.
Handcuff every single person here,
except for the manager. Use these-

The Black-Gloved Robber flings a mass at the petite blonde. Plastic handcuffs CLACK upon the marble, slide three yards, and CLICK against the toes of her high-heeled loafers.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)
Fasten their hands behind their
backs. Tight. Do not say anything
to anybody at anytime or you will
be executed.

Terrified, Kelly Summer leans over and claims the plastic restraints. Her hands are shaking, and her face is red. For a moment she glances at the framed picture of her baby.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)
Mr. Edmington?

MR. EDMINGTON
Sir?

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE
One of us will follow you to the
vaults. Open them all.

Fear again fills the face of the bank manager, who then stuffs down his apprehensions and nods.

MR. EDMINGTON
I'll open everything that I-

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE
If our associate does not return
with the gold bullion in three
minutes or less, we will execute
this woman-

Dmetrovic points at the Latina Teller, who then pales.

A loud CLICK comes from the tape player. Captives flinch and shudder. Following this noise are the continual TICKING sounds of a stopwatch...

The Gray-Gloved Robber slings his duffel bags and points the barrel of his silencer-fitted machine gun at Mr. Edmington, who then proceeds toward the rear of the bank. From the tape player continually issue TICKING stopwatch sounds...

Trembling, Kelly Summer tightens the handcuffs around the wrists of Cheryl and then walks over to Williams. His narrowed, baleful eyes are fixed upon the remaining thieves.

Williams sees Kelly Summer and then pointedly glances down. Understanding, the petite blonde looks in the same direction. Upon the black fellow's desk lies an opened laptop computer, the screen of which shows an email that reads, '4 Armed Robbers at N Bulwark Bank. Think they will kill some or many. Send Poli '

Horrified, Kelly Summer stares at the unsent email, one which she feels might initiate a mass killing.

WILLIAMS
(faintly whispered)
Send it.

Stopwatch TICKS echo throughout the bank as the petite blonde shakes her head 'no' and points at her peer's upraised hands.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
(faintly whispered)
Send it.

Kelly Summer angrily shakes her head 'no' and waggles the handcuffs at Williams.

Begrudgingly, the black fellow lowers his arms and pivots to the side. His left hand drifts toward the laptop computer.

Terrified, the petite blonde reaches out.

KELLY SUMMER
Don't!

Automatic gunfire FLASHES. Bullets tear open Kelly Summer's hands. Fingers burst, CRACKLING, and drop to the marble floor. GROANING, the petite blonde collapses.

The Latina Teller YELLS, and some people SCREAM. Guns are aimed at frightened captives, who then stop making noise.

Lying on the marble and in shock, Kelly Summer shoves the mangled remains of her right hand into her coat pocket.

The Black-Gloved Robber approaches his victim and aims the muzzle of his weapon at her face.

Kelly Summer withdraws the baby bootie. The soft, blue fabric quickly reddens in her mutilated hand. Shocked eyes look up at inscrutable goggles.

KELLY SUMMER (CONT'D)
P-please make sure...that my b-baby
gets this.
(she nods her head)
His n-name is-

Flashing gunfire tears off her face.

INT. BACK OF THE WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Muted YELLS resound behind thick glass doors. In the armored cargo van, Henry Johns turns away from the side slit and looks back into the bank. His confusion changes into anger when he apprehends the violent acts that have just been committed by his associates.

HENRY JOHNS
(muttered)
Damn these niggas.

From the bank come WHIMPERS, YELPS, and the continual TICKING of the prerecorded stopwatch...

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

No longer wearing sunglasses or the baseball cap, Ridgeman dials the steering wheel and corners onto Firmament Avenue. Anthony grips the covered sniper rifle that lies across his lap and turns his blond head.

RIDGEMAN
Must've gone this way.

ANTHONY
It sure wasn't the other.

The grim fellow eyes the avenue, which is thick with traffic. A city bus takes on PASSENGERS at the end of the block.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
You think they know we're
following?

RIDGEMAN
Thirty percent--though I'm hoping
they saw us in Brownvine.

ANTHONY
You're hoping they saw us?

Dialing the wheel, Ridgeman circumvents the bus and hits a pocket of nothing. Through this open stretch he accelerates.

RIDGEMAN
If they know they've been spotted,
they might abort whatever it is
they've got planned.

The New Yorker nods his head appreciatively.

ANTHONY
I'm glad to hear your priorities
have changed.

RIDGEMAN
If civilians are at risk, they're
the priority. Money or no money;
badge or no badge.
(he glances at Anthony)
You had doubts?

ANTHONY
Microscopic ones, if any, though
it's good to hear things
articulated.

An upcoming traffic light changes to yellow, and the grim fellow STOMPS on the gas pedal. The gray sedan ROARS through the intersection.

Noticing something up ahead and to the right, Anthony gestures. Ridgeman looks in the indicated direction.

There sits the white cargo van, parked at an angle upon the sidewalk that fronts the Trusted Bank of North Bulwark. The back of the vehicle faces the partners, and its right taillight is flush against the stone facade.

For an ugly moment, Ridgeman and Anthony stare in disgust at the parked automobile.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
That isn't ambiguous.

RIDGEMAN
Crud.

The grim fellow relieves the gas pedal as his gray sedan nears the white cargo van. Facing him is the driver's side, which bears the teal 'Nationwide Security Services' logo.

ANTHONY
Is that an embrasure?

RIDGEMAN
What's an embrasure?

ANTHONY
Do you see an opening--a horizontal slit--under the word, 'Nationwide'?

Slowly driving by the van, Ridgeman glances at the painted logo. Hidden there is a narrow horizontal slit.

INT. BACK OF THE WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

In the back of the cargo van, Henry Johns aims his silencer-fitted pistol through the embrasure and curls his right index finger around the trigger. His mouth gapes in surprise when he sees the face of his target, the grim fellow.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Nonchalantly, Ridgeman removes his gaze from the white cargo van and drives forward. Anthony grips his covered weapon and looks with feigned disinterest out of his side window.

RIDGEMAN
(quietly)
A guy's in there.

A sports car HONKS at the slowly moving gray sedan, but the grim fellow maintains his speed as he passes by the white cargo van and glances to his right. Reclining in the driver's seat of this diagonally parked automobile, smoking a cigarette, and perusing a newspaper is Biscuit, who currently wears Caucasian body paint, nose putty, a teal uniform, sunglasses, and a brunette wig that is mostly tucked underneath his cap. The van's open passenger door conceals any clear view of the bank entrance from the front.

Ridgeman accelerates while Anthony reclaims the camera.

ANTHONY
So it's a robbery.

RIDGEMAN
Yep.

The gray sedan passes through one intersection and then two more. At present, the grim fellow sees a space on far side of the road, jerks a U-turn, slots the vehicle into the opening, and disgustedly flings the gear into park.

Anthony sets the draped camera atop the dashboard, powers on the monitor, and adjusts the lens. Upon the screen (and three blocks to the west) sits the van that is attached like a leech to the entrance of the Trusted Bank of North Bulwark.

ANTHONY

We wait 'til they drive off?

RIDGEMAN

Yep. This's a robbery until somebody turns it into something worse.

Upon the monitor, Biscuit exhales smoke through the driver's side window, which is ajar.

ANTHONY

You don't know what an embrasure is?

RIDGEMAN

No.

ANTHONY

Ever visited a castle?

RIDGEMAN

Don't continue this explanation.

Anthony watches the monitor as Ridgeman surveys the vicinity. A few moments pass, and the grim fellow does not see anything of value.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

Crud.

ANTHONY

I'm old enough for profanity.

RIDGEMAN

Broke the habit when Sara was born. Melanie and I didn't want her talking like a cop.

ANTHONY

You were looking for a place to box them in?

RIDGEMAN

Pointlessly. It's the financial district on a weekday. We can't engage them here.

For a moment, the partners ponder the situation.

ANTHONY

Think they're going back to the parking garage after this?

RIDGEMAN
Fifty percent.

ANTHONY
Fifty percent doesn't value
anything in a yes or no question.

The grim fellow sees something and frowns.

RIDGEMAN
I hope this asshole doesn't get too
curious-

Ridgeman gestures across the street and down the block to a suited male PEDESTRIAN who currently strolls west on the sidewalk toward the bank. The partners watch as this individual crosses a road and enters the camera image, which is zoomed in on the white cargo van.

Biscuit mouths some words to the Pedestrian.

ANTHONY
"Go around the van. We're loading."

The suited guy says something in reply. Exhaling smoke, the stout fellow in teal speaks.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
"The bank will reopen in fifteen
minutes. Come back then." He
might've said, "fifty" with a 'y'.

RIDGEMAN
Probably not.

The Pedestrian nods his head, turns around, and strolls east on the sidewalk. At present, the stout black fellow in Caucasian body paint exhales a thick plume of smoke.

ANTHONY
Guy's like a cigarette commercial.

Eyes fixed on the monitor, Ridgeman places a cigarette between his lips and thumbs his lighter. A flame waggles, and hirsute fibers glow as he sucks smoke into his system.

The grim fellow EXHALES. Smoke clears as black boots hasten across the space that is visible underneath the van's open passenger's door. The white automobile rocks on its springs.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
They're boarding.

Ridgeman steps on the brakes and flings the gear into drive.

Upon the monitor, Henry Johns reclaims the van's passenger seat and shuts the door. This image is suddenly blocked by the arrival of a city bus.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Anchovies.

The grim fellow accelerates, and an oncoming sports car SKIDS to avoid a collision. RUMBLING, the gray sedan shoots west.

Anthony tosses the camera into the backseat and reclaims the sniper rifle. Beyond the traffic, tires SCREECH and car horns HONK. Ridgeman tightens his grip upon the wheel.

Neither partner can currently see the quarry. The grim fellow speeds through an intersection and finds another open stretch. SKIDS and HONKS sound up ahead as the gray sedan catches a yellow light and closes the distance.

Ridgeman and Anthony look to the left, where stands the Trusted Bank of North Bulwark.

The white cargo van is gone.

Instantly, the grim fellow turns his attention forward, appraises the traffic that separates him from his fleeing quarry, and angles toward an opening.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ.

Ridgeman looks at Anthony, who currently stares in horror through the driver's side window. The grim fellow then looks in the same direction. His stomach tightens.

The front doors of the Trusted Bank of North Bulwark are locked. Against the glass, the Latin Teller pounds a bloody fist and screams, though her cry is inaudible. Her left arm has been amputated and gore drains freely from the remaining stump. Behind this maddened woman lie Williams, who has no head, Mr. Edmington, whose groin is carved meat, and the faceless corpse of the young mother, Kelly Summer.

Ridgeman stares at the carnage. His eyes are burn hatefully.

Anthony shakes his head and POUNDS the door with a fist.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Christ.

The grim fellow returns his attention to the traffic, finds an opening, and accelerates west.

Bitterly angry, the New Yorker looks through the rear windshield at the Trusted Bank of North Bulwark. A crowd is starting to gather outside of the locked building.

Nauseated, Anthony turns away and eyes Ridgeman.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
What happened back there is on us.

No response comes from the grim fellow, who currently sees another opening and dials his wheel. A beige sedan is cut off by this action and HONKS at its gray competitor.

Anthony POUNDS, POUNDS, POUNDS the cracked upholstery with his fist. His eyes shine with acidic self-recrimination.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
We could've stopped this.

Ridgeman sees something up ahead. Two blocks to the west, the white cargo van corners, passes under a sign that reads, 'Interstate Highway', and drives onto the corresponding ramp.

Checking mirrors, the grim fellow cuts a diagonal path across traffic. Car horns HONK and BEEP as the gray sedan advances.

Ridgeman drives onto the ramp. On the far side of five vehicles rolls the white cargo van. Anthony clenches his jaw.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
You gonna say anything?

The grim fellow points at the white cargo van.

RIDGEMAN
Focus on that.

The ramps ends. Merging with a moderate amount of traffic, the white cargo van and the gray sedan reposition themselves upon the four-lane interstate. Only a red hybrid lies between the pursuer and its quarry.

ANTHONY
We let those people get killed.

Ignoring this provocation, Ridgeman focuses on the white cargo van, lowers his sun visor, and dons his sunglasses.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
You're not gonna say anything?

From the garbage bag, the grim fellow withdraws two ballistic masks, featureless facial shields that have only fastening straps and narrow eye slits. One of these he sets on his lap, and the other he tosses onto the dashboard.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
You don't have anything to say
about our culpability?

RIDGEMAN
Those Italian emotions are saying
plenty.

ANTHONY
Go to Hell, you heartless fuck.

RIDGEMAN
I never saw that opera.

Anthony clenches his right fist and prepares to launch a punch. Ridgeman does not take his eyes from his quarry.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
By the time we knew this wasn't a
routine drug deal, it was too late.

ANTHONY
We could've called it in when the
van left the parking garage--put
the Bulwark PD on alert.

RIDGEMAN
We didn't. And the chances of that
accomplishing anything in the
sixteen minute interim weren't
fifty percent or even twenty-five.

Frustrated, the New Yorker POUNDS the dashboard with his fist. His anger toward his partner diminishes, but his feelings of self-loathing remain.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
You wanna call Bulwark PD, state
police, the Feds--let them handle
this--go ahead...though that van
and the cutthroats inside will be
vapor before any enforcement agency
can respond.

Anthony does not dispute the veracity of this statement. His eyes focus on the black ballistic mask that lies in front of him upon the dashboard.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
We're it.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - LATE MORNING

Biscuit adjusts the steering wheel of the white cargo van and glances furtively at Henry Johns, who occupies the passenger's seat. Both men still wear their skin paint and teal security disguises. The stout fellow is troubled, and his slim friend is angry. Seated behind this duo in the body of the automobile are Dmetrovic and the two Robbers. Masks and blue goggles cover their faces, and depending from the straps on their right shoulders are the silencer-fitted machine guns. Four loaded duffel bags lie on the corrugated floor of the van as does Cheryl, who is prone, handcuffed, and shivering. Duct tape covers her eyes.

Biscuit glares at Dmetrovic through the rearview mirror and then returns his gaze to the road.

BISCUIT
You said you weren't going to kill
anyone unless it was in self-
defense. You gave us your word.

DMETROVIC
Get on the interstate.

BISCUIT
It was excessive--what happened in
there.

Frustrated, the stout fellow shakes his head and SNORTS through his nose. Blue goggles glimmer as all three masked men monitor the argumentative driver.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
Do you wish to expand upon your
critique?
Give us the urban point of view?

HENRY JOHNS
He don't got nothin' more to say.
(quietly to Biscuit)
Hush that flap, nigga.

Biscuit looks at Henry Johns.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Keep your 'ttention on the road. We
almost through this.

The stout fellow nods his head and watches the interstate.

DMETROVIC
Slim. Stout.

HENRY JOHNS
Yeah?

BISCUIT
Yes?

DMETROVIC
Place your firearms inside of the
glove box.

Henry Johns and Biscuit exchange uneasy glances.

In the body of the van, three pairs of blue goggles swivel forward and fixate upon the painted duo.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
That wasn't a suggestion.

A ponderous quiet fills the van. Dmetrovic and the Robbers tighten their grips upon their machine guns, but do not yet aim these weapons at anybody. Pulses quicken inside of the slim fellow and his stout friend.

Everyone remains still as the van rolls northeast. Tires THUD in a pot hole; the vehicle SHUDDERS. Silenced muzzles waver.

At present, Henry Johns nods his head.

HENRY JOHNS

Aight.

The slim fellow opens the flap and sets his silenced pistol into the glove compartment. Reluctantly, the stout man yields his firearm to his friend, who then places it atop the other.

DMETROVIC

Cover that weaponry with the sports section.

Henry Johns picks up Biscuit's newspaper and claims the sports section, which he then uses to blanket the firearms.

DMETROVIC (CONT'D)

Close the door.

The slim fellow shuts the glove compartment door. Newspaper CRINKLES.

DMETROVIC (CONT'D)

Close the door.

HENRY JOHNS

It's closed.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER

We didn't hear a click.

(he TAPS his left ear)

We want to hear a click.

With more force, Henry Johns presses his palm against the glove compartment door. A latch CLICKS.

DMETROVIC

Do not open the glove box unless I have given you my permission.

HENRY JOHNS

Aight.

BISCUIT

Okay.

Henry Johns glances back to the cargo area, where sit Dmetrovic and the Robbers. Silencers and three pairs of inscrutable blue goggles glimmer in the half-light.

The slim fellow reclines in his seat and looks at the side-view mirror. Directly behind the white cargo van rolls the red hybrid.

Henry Johns shifts in his seat, gets a slightly different point of view, and sees past the environmentally conscious car. A piece of the gray sedan is now visible.

With a start, the slim fellow recognizes the automobile that he last saw on Firmament Avenue. His mouth opens, but he does not say anything.

BISCUIT (CONT'D)
Something there?

HENRY JOHNS
Nah. Nothin'.

Leaning back, Henry Johns eyes the side-view mirror. In the reflection he sees the gray sedan and an orange dot that currently glows in front of the silhouetted driver's head.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Ridgeman sucks on a shrinking cigarette as Anthony tightens the chest strap of the ballistic vest that he now wears over his black sweater.

RIDGEMAN
Crud. The interstate.

ANTHONY
Any ideas where they're gonna land?

RIDGEMAN
Someplace rural where they can
exchange vehicles, but where that
is...

Frowning, the grim fellow exhales a dagger of smoke.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - LATE DAY

The gray lady RUMBLES, and the sun is long past its zenith on this hot day. Ridgeman exhales smoke as Anthony YAWNS, reclines, and eyes the gas gauge.

ANTHONY
Need to get gas pretty soon.

RIDGEMAN
So do they. We'll curb when they
pull in somewhere.

ANTHONY
You have cans in the trunk?

RIDGEMAN
Was that a question you just asked?

The New Yorker rolls down his window all the way to get more fresh air as Ridgeman drags more smoke.

ANTHONY
I'd really hate for my last meal to
be your cigarettes.

RIDGEMAN
Look-

The grim fellow nods at the white cargo van, the left taillight of which is currently blinking. Smoothly, the quarry drifts over to the turn-off lane.

Anthony scans the upcoming signs as Ridgeman slows, dials the wheel, and places the gray sedan behind the green pickup truck that currently succeeds the white cargo van.

ANTHONY

They're going for the parkway.

Raising an eyebrow, the grim fellow keeps his car twenty feet behind the automobile that trails his quarry.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Think they're going to Dennington?

RIDGEMAN

Eighty-five percent. Lots of places in that shit heap to stash and swap autos.

ANTHONY

What's the other fifteen?

RIDGEMAN

Reroute to another state.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - TWILIGHT

Biscuit drives the white cargo van along the parkway, which currently veers into a rural part of the state. Fear shines in his wide eyes, but no comments come from his closed mouth. Reclining in the passenger seat, Henry Johns looks from his frightened friend to the side-view mirror. The gray sedan is currently hidden behind the green pickup truck.

In the body of the van, Dmetrovic (who has removed his mask from his sweaty head) and the Robbers lean their backs against the steel walls. A weak MOAN escapes Cheryl, who lies prone and handcuffed upon the corrugated floor. Duct tape covers her eyes, and a crumpled newspaper page fills her mouth. Again, she MOANS.

The blue goggles of the Gray-Gloved Robber flash as he appraises the redheaded captive.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER

Quiet.

CHERYL

(muffled by the paper wad)

I need to-

The criminal POUNDS the woman's ear with his knife hilt. YELLING, the captive writhes.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER

The other quiet.

CHERYL
(muffled)
I need to pee!

A flashing knifepoint touches the duct tape that covers Cheryl's right eye.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
Say another word and you're a
pirate.

In the front of the van, Biscuit anxiously grips the steering wheel, and Henry Johns grows tense. Neither man looks back into the cargo area.

Cheryl closes her mouth and quietly SOBS. At present, the Gray-Gloved Robber withdraws the survival knife. Tears leak through the tiny hole that the point made in the duct tape.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
Cover that up.

The criminal takes a piece of bubble gum from his mouth and places it over the tiny aperture.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER (CONT'D)
Our cousin doesn't like the smell
of urine.

The Gray-Gloved Robber raises the survival knife and presses the palm of his other hand flat against Cheryl's back.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
Hold still.

The criminal slides the steel point underneath the captive's waistband and rocks the blade back and forth. RIPPING threads, the serrated edge saws through the magenta skirt and underwear. Pale flesh is revealed.

The Gray-Gloved Robber cuts through the hem and claims the rent clothing. Choked SOBS emerge from the terrified woman, whose nether region is now bare.

Acutely uncomfortable in the driver's seat, Biscuit looks over his shoulder.

HENRY JOHNS
(quietly to Biscuit)
Don't. Keep lookin' forward.

Shaking, the stout fellow redirects his gaze to the road. His concerned head nods up and down, and he swallows dryly.

In the cargo area, the Gray-Gloved Robber balls up the rent clothing and shoves this wad between Cheryl's legs.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
Squirt.

The captive takes several deep breaths in an effort to calm herself. Her respirations slow down, and eventually, urine darkens the magenta fabric.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER

Slim.

HENRY JOHNS

Yeah?

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER

Come get rid of this lady piss.

Suppressing disgust, Henry Johns rolls down his window, snatches the newspaper, walks into the body of the cargo van, and kneels down beside Cheryl. The slim fellow bundles the saturated clothing with CRINKLING print media and carries this smelly mass to the front seat. A glance into the side-view mirror reveals no other vehicles than the green pickup truck and the gray sedan, both of which are very far away.

Henry Johns tosses the soiled ball outside, closes the window, and looks at Biscuit, who is shaking with fear. A tear creeps down the face of the overwhelmed young man.

HENRY JOHNS

We'll get through all this.

This is said with more conviction than the slim fellow currently feels.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

Do what you paid to do and
nevermind them back there.

Biscuit wipes his eyes, an act which accidentally removes a swath of Caucasian paint from his face.

Henry Johns glances ahead. Vegetation surrounds the white cargo van as it rolls into one of the most pastoral parts of Bulwark. Trees that have brown, yellow, and orange leaves stand in this lush area, which is bisected by the parkway. Golden sunlight travels in eddies across rippling grass.

Henry Johns looks to his left. Tears drip down the frightened face of Biscuit. SNIFFLING, the stout fellow wipes his nose and removes from that location some putty and another swath of Caucasian paint. His hands shake upon the wheel.

Concerned, the slim fellow thinks of something to say.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

Remember when your Ma brung us out
here for your birthday?

Biscuit SNIFFLES and nods his head.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

Me, you, and at least ten other
little ones.

(MORE)

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

Some girls was there too--even
though we didn't really want them
'round--but they was your sister's
friends and a coupla neighbors, I
think.
You wanted a ice cream cake so your
ma brung it in a cooler.
(he thinks for a moment)
What was it again?

Adjusting the wheel, the stout fellow glances at his friend.

BISCUIT

Tyrannosaurus Rex.

HENRY JOHNS

That's right, that's right--I
remember now. Nigga was a T-Rex.
And its fangs was made outta candy
corns, but ones that was white with
red on the tips to look like blood--
the meal he just ate.
(he thinks)
Stegosaurus or whoever.

Biscuit wipes his eyes and grins at the memory. At present,
the white cargo van reaches an open part of the parkway.

BISCUIT

I was really into dinosaurs then.

HENRY JOHNS

You was. And you got all pissed off
and shit 'cause your ma gave me the
biggest piece.

The stout fellow CHUCKLES, more composed than he has been at
any time since the robbery.

BISCUIT

The birthday boy gets the biggest
piece. That's in the mother's
handbook.

HENRY JOHNS

Yeah...but she probably knew my ma
wasn't takin' care of me too good.

BISCUIT

She knew.

AMber twilight shines on a distant lake that is briefly
visible from the van.

HENRY JOHNS

Always had a crush on her.

BISCUIT

She knew that too.

The van nears the outer edge of the pastoral area, and an off ramp appears on the right. At present, the stout fellow notches his turn signal and changes lanes.

Biscuit eyes the upcoming sign, which reads, 'Foundry Way'. CLICKING, the turn signal continues to flash.

The stout fellow glances at his side-view mirror, which reveals the distant green pickup truck and the gray sedan.

DMETROVIC
Is anybody following us?

BISCUIT
There's-

HENRY JOHNS
No. Only things behind us are a green pickup and a gray car that got on a little while back.

DMETROVIC
Be vigilant.

HENRY JOHNS
Always am.

Dialing the wheel, Biscuit exits the parkway and follows the curve of the off ramp.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Watching the distant van depart, Ridgeman keeps his gray sedan behind the green pickup truck. Anthony reads a news bulletin from the screen of his cellular phone and shakes his head in disbelief. Autumnal trees and swaths of greenery lie on either side of the road, but go unnoticed by the partners.

ANTHONY
First estimate is five dead, two in critical, one missing.

RIDGEMAN
Crud. That last one's a hostage.

The eyes of the grim fellow do not leave his quarry as he drives into the turn-off lane. His partner continues to read from his cellphone.

ANTHONY
Looks like a large amount of gold bullion was deposited there two days ago.

RIDGEMAN
Not a coincidence.

Disheartened, the New Yorker thumbs off his digital device.

ANTHONY
 Christ. Six lives got punctuation.
 (he shakes his head)
 Six human beings died.

Ridgeman drives while morbid thoughts fill Anthony's mind and percolate. At present, the New Yorker powers on his cellphone, types in the passcode, and fingers a contact. Upon the screen shines a picture of his girlfriend, Denise.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
 I've gotta know.
 (he studies the picture)
 In case we don't come back...I've
 gotta know what she would've said.

RIDGEMAN
 We're coming back.

ANTHONY
 One hundred percent?

RIDGEMAN
 I'm at eighty--maybe even eighty-
 five. You're seventy.

The New Yorker looks a question at the grim fellow, who is currently driving along the off ramp.

ANTHONY
 Experience?

RIDGEMAN
 Yeah. Plus I'm not Italian.

Anthony makes his decision, takes a breath, and thumbs the green icon. Upon the screen is the word, 'Dialing...' The New Yorker presses the receiver to his ear, listens for few seconds, and grimaces.

ANTHONY
 (to Ridgeman)
 It's her voice mail.
 (into the phone)
 Hey Denise. I...I have a favor to
 ask you.
 Pretty important.
 I'm stuck uptown right now and
 there's some information I need
 that's back at my place, so if you
 could swing by there and get it,
 I'd really, really appreciate it.
 It's in the right pocket of my tan
 blazer--the herringbone one I wore
 to your sister's last time.
 I know this's inconvenient, but it
 would really help me out. Call me
 when you get it.
 (he thinks)
 (MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

That's it. Talk to you soon.
Love you. Bye.

Anthony kills the connection and again sees Denise's face upon his cellphone.

RIDGEMAN

Not the most romantic way to propose.

ANTHONY

It isn't, but Denise is smart and very clear minded--she's not gonna change her answer one way or the other because of how I asked her.

RIDGEMAN

I'd give this a-

ANTHONY

Don't tell me a percentage.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - DUSK

The sun has set, and the sky is a luminous charcoal void. Henry Johns looks at Biscuit, who continues to drive the white cargo van along the lengthy off ramp. Tires THUD on a bump. Startled awake, Cheryl flinches, but remains quiet. Dmetrovic and the Robbers silently observe their progress from the back of the vehicle.

Biscuit sees a stop sign and applies the brakes. At the terminus of the ramp, the van halts.

Henry Johns eyes the vicinity and the environs. This area is comprised of factories and warehouses that have rusty, boarded-up, and abraded facades. None of these buildings are in use, and the cracked streets are empty. The slim fellow SNIFFS and wrinkles his nose at the smell.

Biscuit accelerates through the intersection. Tires RUMBLE on riven pavement that has not seen upkeep in three decades.

The white cargo van reaches the next intersection, which lacks both street and stop signs. A capsized grocery cart lies on a nearby corner.

Accelerating, Biscuit crosses the road and continues west. Cyclopean factories crowd the sky with long-unused smoke stacks, girders, and catwalks. Abandoned fossils of American industry loom on every horizon.

The van passes through three more intersections. Ruminating on what happened that morning and what is about happen, Henry Johns watches the oppressive tableau. Something glimmers in the road up ahead.

HENRY JOHNS

Watch this up here.

BISCUIT

I see it.

The stout fellow steers the vehicle around a pit that is filled with broken bottles. Sodium light glimmers upon this array of shattered glass.

Decided on a plan of action, Henry Johns glances at Biscuit.

HENRY JOHNS

Let's grab takeout when we done
with this. I'm really in the mood
for cellophane noodles.

Fearfully understanding the hidden message in this statement, the stout fellow nods his head. His pulse quickens.

BISCUIT

Okay.

Tires CLANK on a metal plank that covers a gap in the road.

Perspiring and anxious, Henry Johns leans back in his seat, reaches his right hand into a slit in the upholstery, and carefully removes a cellophane-wrapped semiautomatic. This clandestine weapon he slides into the pocket of his teal pants. Wiping sweat from his eyes, he accidentally removes a swath of Caucasian body paint and the nose putty.

The slim fellow glances at his stout friend, who is currently sliding his left hand into his chair.

DMETROVIC

Stout.

Biscuit tenses, withdraws his hand, and turns his head.

BISCUIT

Yes?

DMETROVIC

Is anybody following after us? The
green pickup that you earlier
mentioned or the gray car?

BISCUIT

No.

DMETROVIC

Please check your mirrors.

The stout fellow looks into both side-view mirrors. Only empty roads, refuse, and abandoned factories are visible.

BISCUIT

Nothing but rust and air.

HENRY JOHNS

I keep a eye out.

Taking another deep, calming breath, Biscuit slides his left hand into the slit upholstery. From within he withdraws the second cellophane-wrapped semiautomatic, which he fumbles for a moment and then pockets.

Heart-racing, Henry Johns reclines in his seat.

Biscuit drives toward another intersection, swallows dryly, and flicks the turn signal. CLICKING, the right arrow blinks.

DMETROVIC

To whom are you signaling?

BISCUIT

Nobody. No one.

(he turns off the signal)

I just did it out of habit.

Biscuit looks over his shoulder. One set of sunken eyes and two pairs of blue goggles coldly stare at him from the back.

The stout fellow returns his gaze to the road, dials the steering wheel clockwise, and corners onto a narrower street, where stand rows of vacant warehouses. Tires THUD in a pothole, and the van bounces. Cheryl SMACKS her head against the corrugated floor and stifles a grunt.

Henry Johns eyes the vicinity, which contains sunken warehouses, two boarded-up parking garages, and a blackened cafeteria. His gaze turns forward.

On the right of the upcoming block and illuminated by a few cracked sodium lights sits a long, low concrete building that is covered with graffiti. Two metal garage doors stand on the visible south face of this edifice as does an incomplete sign that reads, 'Gas St_t_on.' A display upon a raised island that long ago had two fuel pumps proclaims, '\$0.78 per gallon'.

Perspiration pulls dark stripes down the face of Henry Johns as Biscuit drives through the intersection.

HENRY JOHNS

We here.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER

'We are here' or 'We're here'. Not

'We here'.

Irked, the slim fellow presses his hand to his pocketed gun, spins in his seat, and faces the masked grammarian. Three machine gun muzzles are pointed forward.

HENRY JOHNS

You understood me, didn't you?

The Gray-Gloved Robber and Henry Johns stare at each other.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

Didn't you?

DMETROVIC
Please face forward.

The slim fellow calms himself, SNORTS derisively, and turns back to the windshield.

HENRY JOHNS
Nigga is exacerbatin'.

Biscuit dials the wheel clockwise, drives onto the vast concrete lot, and steers toward the defunct gas station. Ugly yellow sodium lights glare upon the dusty windshield.

DMETROVIC
Is the garage door still intact?

Henry Johns appraises the closed garage door that stands on the southeast corner of the building.

HENRY JOHNS
Looks like.

Biscuit steers toward the aforementioned door. Dmetrovic nods at the Black-Gloved Robber.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
Slim.

HENRY JOHNS
Yeah?

The Black-Gloved Robber whips his free hand forward. JINGLING metal flashes through the body of the van, SMACKS the windshield, and drops. Lying on the dashboard in front of Henry Johns are five keys. Beads of sweat remove pale paint from the young man's face.

DMETROVIC
Open the garage.

HENRY JOHNS
C'n I take my gun out the glove box? In case-

DMETROVIC
You may not.

Henry Johns frowns as the van nears the building. At a distance of twenty-five feet from the garage doors, Biscuit brakes and shifts into park.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Heartbeat racing, Henry Johns snatches the keys from the dashboard, flings his door, and hops outside. His work boots SCUFF the concrete as he lands and walks to the southeast garage door, which is secured fast by two big padlocks.

Muted FOOTFALLS sound within the cargo van, and the slim fellow turns around. Inside the vehicle, the Gray-Gloved Robber lands in the passenger's seat and casually points his machine gun at Biscuit's face.

HENRY JOHNS
(under his breath)
Damn.

Henry Johns turns back to the garage door and selects the key that is labelled, '#1'. This piece of steel he slides into the right padlock and turns. The mechanism CLICKS. At present, the slim fellow unhooks the shackle from the hasp. Sodium light glares momentarily upon the metal.

Henry Johns drops the lock, which SMACKS the concrete, and then exchanges a quick but meaningful look with Biscuit. Within the van, the latter fellow mouths the word, 'Yes'.

Henry Johns walks to the left side of the southeast garage door and glances at the Gray-Gloved Robber, whose eyes are hidden by his blue goggles. The silencer-fitted muzzle of his machine gun is currently aimed at the stout driver.

Metal JINGLES as the slim fellow slots the #2 key into the second lock. His hand twists, and the mechanism CLICKS.

Fighting against fear and painfully aware that his life and that of his best friend are about to be gambled, Henry Johns wipes sweat (and Caucasian paint) from his eyes, fills his lungs, and finds an inner calm.

In the driver's seat of the van, Biscuit stops breathing.

The slim fellow unhooks the shackle from the hasp and drops the heavy lock. Glimmering metal plummets through the air. Steel SMACKS concrete.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Hearing this signal in the van, Biscuit shoves the Gray-Gloved Robber. The criminal falls through the open passenger side as the stout fellow yanks the key from the ignition and jerks the nearby door handle.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS STATION - SAME

The shoulders and back of the Gray-Gloved Robber SMACK against the concrete, and his muzzle flashes.

Bullets CLANK against the armor-plated ceiling of the van as Biscuit dives through the driver's side. Ricocheting lead RIPS into his back and legs as he FLOPS on the pavement.

Henry Johns withdraws his cellophane-wrapped semiautomatic, finds a clear shot of the Gray-Gloved Robber, and squeezes the trigger. Gunshots BOOM.

Bullets CRACK the pavement, dig into the criminal's right shoulder, and rip apart his clenched left fist, which shields (and saves) his masked head.

Pointing the machine gun blindly backwards, the Gray-Gloved Robber squeezes the trigger.

Henry Johns dives behind the gas station as the muzzle flashes. Bullets CLANK against the garage door and SMACK into the Gas St_t_on sign. Falling, the slim fellow SLAMS shoulder first onto the pavement.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

GUNSHOTS echo across the abandoned factory district as Anthony and Ridgeman pull ballistic masks over their faces. (Both of these men already wear bulletproof vests atop their clothing.) Across the cracked pavement RUMBLES the gray lady.

From the door panel, the grim fellow withdraws a pistol, which he then holds beneath the dashboard in his right hand. The New Yorker concurrently thumbs the safety off of the sniper rifle that lies across his thighs. At present, the latter man sees a crater of glinting sodium light.

ANTHONY

Pit filled with broken glass.

Dialing the wheel, Ridgeman circumvents the small crater in which lie myriad broken bottles. Amidst these shards he sees the incomplete bodies of several rats.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

The Gray-Gloved Robber lunges into the cargo van and closes the door, which THUNKS shut. His right hand grips the blasted, gory terminus of his left arm.

Behind the southeast corner of the building, Henry Johns raises his smoking semiautomatic, which has a curling bouquet of shriveling cellophane on its top half. From his present position he cannot see or be seen by anyone else.

Prostrated on the far side of the van, Biscuit presses his shaking palms to the concrete and pushes. His wounded legs and back bleed, and his body shakes. GRUNTING, he collapses.

Heavy footfalls THUD within the van.

With a trembling left hand, Biscuit shoves the ignition key into his mouth and swallows. An ugly retching sound comes from his throat as he CHOKES down the stainless steel. His right hand slides toward his pocket, wherein lies the gun.

Hidden by the southeast corner of the gas station, Henry Johns thinks of a tactic, turns around, and starts to run toward the back of the building...

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

The Black-Gloved Robber walks up to the driver's seat, glances at his injured, one-handed peer, and eyes the empty ignition. Irrked, the criminal aims his machine gun through the door at the stout fellow, who lies prone, shaking, and bleeding on the concrete.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
Give me the key.

No answer comes from Biscuit, whose right hand is hidden within his pants pocket. The Black-Gloved Robber scans the area for the missing key.

DMETROVIC
Shoot him and use the spare key.

The Black-Gloved Robber glances at Dmetrovic.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
The spare's on the ring that I gave
to Slim.

Dmetrovic frowns.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Biscuit withdraws his gun, the nose of which SCRAPES across the concrete. The Black-Gloved Robber sees this clumsy move and squeezes his trigger. His muzzle flashes.

One inch from the stout fellow's head, bullets CRACK open the pavement. Blasted concrete cuts his face and fills his right ear. His pistol CLATTERS on the ground.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
Where is the key?

Blinded by blood and grit, the stout fellow turns to face the criminal.

BISCUIT
Did you check your mother's rectum?

The muzzle flashes. Bullets CRACK the concrete that lies between Biscuit's legs. Blasted chunks of pavement RIP into his groin. Agonized, he GROANS.

EXT. BACK LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Gun upraised and on the far side of the gas station, Henry Johns runs toward the next corner and turns to the left. His boots SCUFF concrete as he careens toward his friend...

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Sitting in the driver's seat, the Black-Gloved Robber scans the area for Henry Johns and again returns his attention to Biscuit, who is bloodied and prone.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
Where is the key?

BISCUIT
Ask a proctologist.

The stout fellow CHUCKLES and COUGHS up bile. A piece of metal CLINKS upon the pavement. Hearing this sound, he blindly reaches for what he knows must be the van key.

In the van, the Black-Gloved Robber aims his machine gun.

BOOMING gunshots sound from the southwest corner of the gas station. Bullets CLANK against the driver's door and SLAM it shut. The Black-Gloved Robber shoots the inside of the door twice and releases the trigger.

HENRY JOHNS
Hold tight, nigga.

Henry Johns emerges from behind the southwest corner of the gas station and runs toward Biscuit, who blindly jams the key into his mouth and swallows it down for a second time.

The slim fellow closes the distance, leans over, and grabs his wounded friend's left arm.

BISCUIT
Get out of here.

The Black-Gloved Robber opens the driver's door, and again, Henry Johns fires a BOOMING shot that SLAMS the panel closed.

BISCUIT (CONT'D)
Leave me. This whole-

HENRY JOHNS
Shut that flap.

Across concrete, the slim fellow drags his friend, who GRUNTS and eventually YELLS in agony.

BISCUIT
Henry, stop! Stop!

Pausing, Henry Johns looks back. A wide, thick swath of dark blood colors the concrete behind Biscuit. The stout fellow's perforated back, groin, and legs bleed copiously, and it is clear that he is not going to survive his wounds.

HENRY JOHNS
(quietly)
Damn.

BISCUIT

This whole thing...was my idea. My fault. Just-

A CLANK echoes. Henry Johns looks over and sees the open embrasure. Something glimmers on the far side of this slit.

BISCUIT (CONT'D)

Get!

Unhappily decided, Henry Johns makes a beeline for the southwest corner of the gas station.

The silencer-fitted muzzle of a machine gun extrudes from the slit and flashes. Bullets CRACK into the corner of the gas station a moment after the slim fellow is safe.

BISCUIT (CONT'D)

If you get the gold, give some to my ma.

Henry Johns puts his shoulder to the corner of the building.

HENRY JOHNS

I take care of her good.

The extruding muzzle tilts at Biscuit, who currently lies sixteen feet away from the van.

BISCUIT

Get her a nice television--one of those-

The muzzle flashes. Bullets CRACK into the back of Biscuit's head and SLAM his face against the concrete. Senseless, the body of the stout fellow twitches twice and stops moving.

Hidden behind the building corner, the slim fellow grits his teeth and wipes his sparkling eyes.

DMETROVIC (O.S.)

Do you see the key?

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER (O.S.)

He swallowed it.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER (O.S.)

And Slim's still out there.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Sitting in the back of the cargo van, Dmetrovic ruminates for a moment, glances at Cheryl, and then looks at the Robbers.

DMETROVIC

Make the cunt drag the fat coon inside so that you can gut him.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Henry Johns stuffs down his repulsion and focuses on the more immediate problem of staying alive. His gaze goes to the roof of the building when something CLANKS upon a metal plank that lies in the road.

Warily, the slim fellow puts half of one eye around the corner and looks east. Between warehouses on the neighboring block creeps the familiar gray sedan.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

At a speed of five miles per hour and with both front windows rolled down, the gray sedan brings the masked, armed, and suspended partners up the road toward the gas station. Anthony aims the sniper rifle at the white cargo van, which still sits near the main building, while Ridgeman surveys the area. Silence and sodium light dominate the concrete oasis.

ANTHONY

Should we drive past and come at them from behind?

RIDGEMAN

No. We need to box them in right here, right now.

(he scans the area)

A conflict couldn't happen in a better, less populated place than this.

At present, the gray sedan rolls to the other side of the white cargo van, where lies the dead body of Biscuit. Also visible to Ridgeman and Anthony is Henry Johns, who currently holds a semiautomatic while leaning his back against the west wall of the station building.

ANTHONY

Look like problems with the hired help.

A mechanical CLANK garners the attentions of both men, who then eye the van. The driver's door opens, and somebody tumbles outside and FLOPS onto the pavement.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Bottomless, barefoot, and wearing a magenta blouse, Cheryl stands upright upon the concrete. The duct tape blindfold has been removed from her eyes, which squint in the sodium light. Behind her, the door shuts.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

From the stopped, but RUMBLING gray sedan, the partners watch the captive.

ANTHONY
Cheryl Oswald's still alive.

RIDGEMAN
That front door looked armored.

The silencer-fitted muzzle of a machine gun emerges from the horizontal slit.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Crud.

ANTHONY
That's what an embrasure's for.

RIDGEMAN
Thing's a rolling bunker.

The right rear door of the cargo van swings open. Anthony and Ridgeman duck a moment before bullets SHATTER the front and back windshields of the gray sedan.

Hunched low, the grim fellow flings the gear into park, leaves the engine running, and opens his door, which is on the hidden side of the vehicle. Flying lead CLANKS against the passenger door and WHISTLES through the air for three more long seconds.

ANTHONY
This's excessive.

Keeping below the window, Ridgeman crawls out onto the pavement. Anthony maintains the same low altitude as he carries the sniper rifle forward and joins his partner.

EXT. STREET THAT ABUTS GAS STATION - SAME

Ridgeman leans against the rear tire of his car as Anthony prostrates himself. A dozen bullets CRACK the concrete and CLANK into metal on the exposed side of the vehicle. The prone New Yorker slides his weapon under the gray sedan and looks through the telescopic sight at the white cargo van, which sits more than three hundred feet away. Neon green fluid DRIPS onto his left elbow.

ANTHONY
You've got a leak.

RIDGEMAN
I'm aware.

ANTHONY
Pretty sure it's coolant.

Anthony scans the enemy vehicle and looks at Cheryl, who is grabbing Biscuit's wrists.

RIDGEMAN
Don't get shot.

ANTHONY
They don't have the right angle
unless th-

Bullets CRACKLE on the pavement in front of the gray sedan.
The New Yorker wipes grit from his face as the dust settles.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
-unless they get on the ground. And
since I'm already here, I'll get
off the first shots.

RIDGEMAN
You learn this in the army?

ANTHONY
Geometry, actually.

Gun in hand, Ridgeman lies down and looks past the gray
lady's undercarriage. SCRAPING sounds echo as Cheryl drags
Biscuit across the concrete toward the white cargo van.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Why're they making her do that?
They wanna clean things up before
they go?

RIDGEMAN
Seventy-five percent.

ANTHONY
What's the other twenty-five?

RIDGEMAN
Not sure, but something weird.

Through the ballistic mask, the grim fellow eyeballs the van,
the vast concrete lot, and the central building.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Did you see where the other helper
went?

ANTHONY
Skinny black guy?

RIDGEMAN
Him.

ANTHONY
No. I think he disappeared during
the first barrage.

RIDGEMAN
He's a variable we didn't need.

Ridgeman turns away, looks up and down the road, and scans
the environs, where stand warehouses and the burnt cafeteria.
Nothing moves anywhere. Irked, the grim fellow returns his
attention to the gas station.

SCRAPING noises resound as Cheryl drags Biscuit across the concrete to the front of the white cargo van. The driver's door reopens, and the woman clumsily drags the body inside.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Start the party.

Exhaling calmly, the New Yorker squeezes the trigger. The silencer-fitted muzzle flashes, and a shot WHISTLES across the gas station lot. With a loud SMACK, the bullet impacts the van's left rear tire.

The spent cartridge ejects from the rifle and CLINKS upon the pavement. Through the scope, Anthony stares in disbelief.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Did you miss?

ANTHONY
Don't be an asshole.

Ridgeman tosses the spent shell into his gray sedan as Anthony squeezes the trigger. Jerking, the rifle flashes. The WHISTLING shot SMACKS against the same rear tire. Nothing happens to the wheel.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
The rolling bunker has airless tires.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Hunched in the passenger seat of the white cargo van and watching the side-mirrors is the Gray-Gloved Robber, whose blasted left hand is currently held together by a dark red towel and duct tape. Cheryl presses her bound, half-nude form deeply into the farthest corner while Dmetrovic raises Biscuit's shirt from his stomach. Near the body, the Black-Gloved Robber withdraws a survival knife.

DMETROVIC
Remove his stomach so that the key
does not fall into his entrails.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
I will.

The Black-Gloved Robber kneels, places the knifepoint against Biscuit's belly, and presses down until an inch of steel is buried in cold flesh. A trickle of blood runs from the wound to the corrugated floor.

Eyeing the incision, the Russian leader holds his left index finger and thumb three quarters of an inch apart.

The criminal presses the blade deeper, repositions his grip, and saws up and down. Blood drains as he slices open brown, yellow, and red layers.

DMETROVIC
Are these masked newcomers doing
anything?

Up front, the Gray-Gloved Robber leans toward the driver's side mirror and scrutinizes the reflection of the gray sedan. Nothing stirs within or around the vehicle, which sits more than three hundred feet away.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
Still hiding. Think they're cops?

DMETROVIC
Not unless they're crooked ones who
came for the gold. I suspect that
these men are Slim's associates.

A muzzle flashes underneath the distant gray sedan, and a WHISTLING bullet SHATTERS the driver's side mirror. The Black-Gloved Robber raises his gaze from the autopsy.

DMETROVIC (CONT'D)
Stay focused on your work.
This duo isn't properly armed for
an engagement with us.

The criminal continues sawing across the corpse's belly. At present, he pries open the incision and looks inside.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
It's the pale sac in there--the one
that looks like-

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER
I know which one it is.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
Be sure not to pop his liver--
that's the worst smell in the
world. Black guys especially.

The Black-Gloved Robber reaches into Biscuit, grips a pale sac, and pulls. The esophagus and duodenum grow taut as he lifts the stomach from the cavity. At present, he sets the organ in the corpse's upturned left hand.

With the knife, the Black-Gloved Robber cuts through the tubes and slices open the food sac. Lying within the foul-smelling gastric stew is the van key.

DMETROVIC
Dump him and drive.

The Black-Gloved Robber jams the stomach back into Biscuit's sliced abdomen and grabs a limp left arm.

EXT. STREET THAT ABUTS GAS STATION - SAME

Hidden behind the gray sedan and lying next to Anthony, Ridgeman tosses the second spent shell into the backseat. The grim fellow SNORTS and shakes his head in frustration.

ANTHONY
Should we call this in?
Anonymously? We're not equipped for-

A distant CLANK silences the New Yorker, who then looks across the gas station lot. The driver's door of the white cargo van opens and out tumbles Biscuit, who THUDS against the concrete. Organs spill out of his lacerated belly.

RIDGEMAN
Things are getting weird.

Taillights shine on the van, which then CHITTERS and RUMBLES.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Get in.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Front and back doors of the idling gray sedan swing open. Anthony crawls across the rear bench with his sniper rifle while Ridgeman clambers into the driver's seat. Exposing only his bulletproof face and shoulders, the grim fellow steps on the brake, flings the gear into drive, and STOMPS the gas pedal. Tires SHRIEK as the gray sedan lurches forward.

Ridgeman spins the wheel, yanks a U-turn, and aims the nose of his car directly at the side of the white cargo van. Hastily, he jerks a seatbelt across his chest and slots the buckle, which CLICKS.

Hearing this unfamiliar sound, Anthony looks forward.

ANTHONY
We're crashing?

RIDGEMAN
One hundred percent.

ANTHONY
Thanks for letting me know.

RIDGEMAN
You heard me buckle.

Aiming the sniper rifle, the New Yorker fires at the Black-Gloved Robber, who is sitting behind the wheel. The bullet SMACKS against the bulletproof glass, which does not break.

ANTHONY
Lasagna.

From the van's embrasure, a muzzle emerges. Ridgeman sits low as Anthony braces himself in the rear footwells.

Bullets WHISTLE through open frames that once contained windshields and CLANK against the hood of the gray sedan. One shot CRACKS off a piece of the steering wheel and another SMACKS the grim fellow's ballistic vest. Three bullets RIP open the passenger's seat headrest.

Ridgeman STOMPS the accelerator and drives directly at the white cargo van, which is now rolling in reverse. Seventy feet separate the two vehicles. Engines ROAR and the intervening space diminishes. Fists clenched on the wheel, the grim fellow braces for impact.

The gray sedan POUNDS into the side of the white cargo van. Ridgeman SMACKS his ballistic mask into a HISSING airbag as his seatbelt SNAPS taut. Anthony SLAMS his head against the back of the passenger's seat.

Shoved by the car, the white cargo van SKIDS sideways until its right side tires SMACK into the raised concrete island that once housed gas pumps. Unbalanced, the automobile tilts onto two wheels.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

The white cargo van leans. Gravity flings Dmetrovic, the Robbers, and Cheryl toward the passenger side of the vehicle, where an array of shoulders, limbs, and heads CLANK against steel plates. Duffel bags ripple across corrugated metal.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Precariously balanced against the gas pump island and the smoking front of the gray sedan, the dented van stands on its two right wheels.

Ridgeman and Anthony raise firearms and squeeze triggers. Airbags POP and deflate as bullets CLANK against the tilting automobile. Shoved by flying lead, the van tips over and SLAMS onto its side. Tires spin, but the capsized vehicle is unable to move.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Ridgeman flings his gear into reverse and STOMPS the gas pedal. Tires SHRIEK and metal GROANS as the gray sedan withdraws from cargo van. Abruptly, the grim fellow cuts the wheel hard to the right and jams the brakes. Tires SQUEAL, and the horizon blurs.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

At the end of a trail of burnt rubber and dark smoke, the spinning gray sedan SKIDS to a halt and is put into park.

Seventy feet of concrete lies between the idling car and the capsized van, which both face north. Ridgeman and Anthony clamber out of the gray lady's hidden side.

The grim fellow points his semiautomatic across the hood of his sedan and aims at the van's upturned door while the New Yorker prostrates himself under the trunk and trains his muzzle upon the van's rear exit. Both points of egress are now covered by the partners.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Standing on the floor of the van (which was once the right wall), the Gray-Gloved Robber shoves the silencer of his machine gun into the newspaper-filled mouth of Cheryl. Dmetrovic reaches into his gray sweatpants and withdraws a wallet, which he then opens and holds aloft. Sitting in a small plastic window is the captive's driver's license.

A light flashes as the Black-Gloved Robber photographs this identification card with his cellular phone.

DMETROVIC

Is her home address legible in that picture?

The criminal scrutinizes the luminous screen.

BLACK-GLOVED ROBBER

Completely.

(he reads)

And she's much younger than she looks.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER

Probably had kids.

Dmetrovic walks over to Cheryl, who still has the silencer of the machine gun in her mouth.

DMETROVIC

Do you have any loved ones at this address?

Tears fill the horrified eyes of the half-nude captive.

DMETROVIC (CONT'D)

That picture and some very unpleasant instructions will go to our associates unless you do exactly what we tell you to do.

Cheryl nods her terrified head as Dmetrovic conceals his face with a ballistic mask and a pair of blue goggles.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Ridgeman guards the upturned driver's door with his semiautomatic while under the tail of the gray sedan, Anthony aims his sniper rifle at the van's rear exit. Fluids DRIP, PLOP, and SPLASH underneath the car.

ANTHONY
(quietly)
It's more than coolant now.

RIDGEMAN
(quietly)
I've got ears.

ANTHONY
(quietly)
Should we make an announcement? Say we're cops?

RIDGEMAN
(quietly)
No. That'll increase the likelihood of a hostage situation by sixty percent.
(shouting)
Hey shithheads, listen up--this is the only deal you're gonna get! We're here for the gold. That's it. Leave the bullion where it is, come outside, and we'll let you walk away.
Stay in that van, and we'll kill all of you--Dmetrovic, sidekick number one, sidekick number two, the girl--everyone.

The partners patiently await a response from the inhabitants of the capsized cargo van. Things CREAK and SCRAPE inside of the automobile, but nobody replies to the deal.

Irked, Ridgeman reaches through the open driver's window of his car and pulls a latch, which CLICKS. CREAKING, the trunk of the gray sedan opens.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
(quietly to Anthony)
Get the gas.

ANTHONY
(quietly)
The tear gas? I thought those-

RIDGEMAN
(quietly)
No. Gasoline.

Concerned by what tactic lies ahead, Anthony rolls out from under the car and reaches into the trunk.

INT. LIVING ROOM / ANTHONY'S APARTMENT - SAME

A bolt SNAPS, and a front door opens. Into a small, shag-carpeted living room that is decorated with framed photographs of 50s and 60s jazz musicians walks Anthony's girlfriend, Denise, who wears black slacks and a lavender coat and holds a purple cellular phone against her right ear.

DENISE

Don't hold the meeting for me--I've been delayed.

(she listens)

I don't think the budget's realistic for metal detectors and wheelchair access--and we need to provide both--but let me do this thing for Tony, and we can get into it when I get back.

(she listens)

Thanks. Bye.

The black social worker kills and pockets her cellphone, closes the door, and twists a bolt, which SNAPS. Walking toward the opposite side of the room, she disturbs shag fibers with her beige boots.

INT. BEDROOM / ANTHONY'S APARTMENT - SAME

Denise opens the bedroom door, stabs a hand into pure darkness, and flips a switch, which CLICKS. Light blossoms from a standing lamp and illuminates the brown room, the windows of which are covered by thick black fabric.

The mirrors that are over the bed and on two walls reflect the social worker as she walks across the carpet. At present, her right hand slides a closet door into its nook.

Denise eyes Anthony's small collection of iridescent and silk clothing. Amidst this colorful assortment she describes the tan, herringbone blazer, which she then claims by its hanger and sets upon the bed.

A cube-shaped lump shows within the jacket's right pocket.

Confused by the shape of this anomaly, the social worker wrinkles her mouth and reaches into the jacket. Her fingers touch upon soft velvet, and a suspicion starts to form.

Denise withdraws the pocketed object, which is a small black jewelry box. Her hands shake as she opens the lid. Nestled within silk folds is the engagement ring that Anthony purchased from Feinbaum a few days earlier.

Stunned, the social worker sits down on the corner of the bed and stares at the marital token. Light glimmers on its white gold band and diagonal array of diamonds.

An uneasy feeling fills her stomach, and she swallows dryly.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS STATION - SAME

Under the tail of the gray sedan and through the scope of the sniper rifle, Anthony monitors the rump of the capsized van, which looks no different than it did one hundred seconds earlier. Near the front tire, Ridgeman stuffs a handkerchief into the nozzle of a red, two-gallon gasoline can while watching the upturned driver's door of the enemy vehicle.

RIDGEMAN
(shouting)
You have forty-five seconds to come
out!

The warning ECHOES. Unseen within the van, Cheryl SCREAMS.

The prone New Yorker grits his teeth, and the grim fellow continues to shove fabric into the nozzle.

A quiet BUZZ sounds near Anthony, who keeps his eyes on his target while he withdraws his cellphone from his pants and raises the device into his field of vision. The screen reads, 'One New Voicemail from Denise Bernwall'

The New Yorker's heart races.

A GUNSHOT sounds within the cargo van, and a man SHOUTS.

Ridgeman sets down the gasoline can, aims his semiautomatic, and glances at Anthony, who pockets his cellphone while looking down the barrel of his sniper rifle at the rear of the capsized vehicle. Tense and anxious, the partners wait.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Fifteen seconds!

Another GUNSHOT sounds. A THUD and several loud FOOTFALLS resonate within the cargo van. The right (currently bottom) back door of the capsized vehicle flies open and SMACKS against the concrete.

Ridgeman redirects his semiautomatic as Anthony looks through his scope. Neither man can see very far into the enemy vehicle, which is dark and lies parallel to the gray sedan.

A tangled mass of red hair extrudes from open rear, and the tense partners aim at this target. Neither man breathes.

Cheryl crawls out of the capsized van. Blood runs down her face and DRIPS onto the concrete. Sodium light shines harshly upon her bare legs and buttocks, which are bruised purple. A torn magenta blouse is all that remains of her outerwear.

Anthony and Ridgeman do not relax their guard as the crawling captive proceeds directly toward the gray sedan. Her knees and palms SCRAPE across the pavement.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Looks female, but verify.

Anthony peers through his scope and more closely sees the bloodied face and red pubic mound of Cheryl.

ANTHONY
 She's a she.
 (calling out)
 Mrs. Oswald?

This solicitation ECHOES. No words emerge from the crawler, whose SCRAPING knees color the concrete. Blood DRIPS from her downturned face as she nods her head, 'yes'.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
 What happened to Dmetrovic and his
 sidekicks?

The question ECHOES as Anthony watches Cheryl proceed.

Ridgeman keeps his gun trained on the rear of the white cargo van while glancing intermittently at the upward-facing front door (which is the only other escape route). No sounds come from within the van.

Ten feet of concrete sit between Cheryl and the tail of the gray sedan, under which lies Anthony.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
 Get behind this vehicle.

The captive COUGHS, wavers for a moment, and crawls onward.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
 Mrs. Oswald? Did you-

CHERYL
 I'm...coming.

Ridgeman eyes the points of egress on the white cargo van while Anthony observes Cheryl.

At present, the bruised, half-nude captive crawls alongside the New Yorker and COUGHS again. The pained woman GRUNTS, teeters, and falls onto her left shoulder.

There is a metallic CLICK.

Terrible comprehension fills Ridgeman.

RIDGEMAN
 She's-

Cheryl withdraws the revolver that was hidden under the left side of her brassiere and aims the weapon at Anthony.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
 -got a-

The New Yorker sees the muzzle, which then EXPLODES in his face.

A bullet SMACKS his ballistic mask and SLAMS his head against the sedan's undercarriage. Burning powder SCORCHES his left eye through the slit.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

-gun.

Ridgeman drops to his knees and swings his pistol around.

SHRIEKING, Cheryl jams the barrel of her revolver under Anthony's ballistic vest.

The grim fellow and the coerced captive squeeze triggers.

Lightning BOOMS thrice as Cheryl fires three bullets point blank into Anthony's guts.

An instant later, Ridgeman squeezes off his shots. Bullets tear the captive's hand from her arm, knock off a piece of her jaw, and pierce her left temple.

Incomplete and in shock, Cheryl FLOPS onto the pavement.

EXT. ROOFTOP / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Prostrated on the roof above the 'Gas St_t_on' sign and next to a pile of roof tiles, Henry Johns films the death of Cheryl with his cellular phone.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Anthony GROANS while Ridgeman rises up and aims his semiautomatic through vacant windows at the rear of the van. A machine gun and half of a masked head appear in the targeted zone.

The grim fellow squeezes his trigger. His gun BOOMS thrice. Two bullets CLANK against the van's undercarriage, and the other CRACKS a blue goggle. Shot through the eye and brain, the Black-Gloved Robber THUDS against the open door.

Kneeling, Ridgeman seizes Anthony by the legs and pulls him behind the car tire. Blood pours from beneath the New Yorker's vest onto the grim fellow's hands.

Anthony shoves off his ballistic mask, which then CLATTERS on the concrete. Ridgeman rises up and eyes the rear of the white cargo van. The dead criminal is dragged inside by a gray-gloved hand that then jerks the door shut. Metals CLANG.

Dropping behind the sedan, Ridgeman raises his mask and looks at Anthony, whose left eye is scorched. The wounded man is bleeding out. At present, the grim fellow reaches for the straps that hold the New Yorker's vest in place.

ANTHONY

Stop.

The partners look at each other.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
I don't wanna see what's under
there.

Ridgeman removes his hands from Anthony.

RIDGEMAN
Okay.

For a moment, the experienced veteran of the streets is overwhelmed by self-recriminations and the terribleness of life. His eyes shine, and he SLAMS a balled up left hand into the door. A bloody print of his fist stains the gray lady.

ANTHONY
That car was innocent.

The grim fellow eyes the dying New Yorker, whose mouth and chin are already dark red with flowing blood.

RIDGEMAN
You want me to drive you to the-

ANTHONY
It hurts too much too move...and
there's no reason.

Ridgeman does not contradict this statement. An awful silence sits between the two partners for a moment.

RIDGEMAN
I don't know the right words for
this situation.

ANTHONY
There aren't any.
(he SPITS blood)
I really hope that this...
mistake...isn't what I'm remembered
for.

RIDGEMAN
I'll keep your name out of it.

ANTHONY
Hope you can.

RIDGEMAN
I will.

Anthony reaches a tremulous hand toward his right pocket. Pain lances his insides, and he GRUNTS.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Lemme get it.

The grim fellow appraises the white cargo van, sees no new developments, and then gently withdraws the cellular phone from the New Yorker's pocket. Upon the screen is the notification, 'One New Voicemail from Denise Bernwall'.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
She called.

ANTHONY
I know.

With a gory, unsteady hand, Anthony claims the cellphone. His index finger puts a bloody print on the screen that the device cannot recognize. Pale and weak, the New Yorker slumps a little to the right.

RIDGEMAN
I'll type for you.

ANTHONY
The passcode's-

RIDGEMAN
I know it.

The grim fellow wipes his hands, reclaims the cellphone, types in his partner's passcode, selects the voicemail screen, and fingers the play arrow.

ANTHONY
Let me hold it.

Ridgeman returns the cellphone to Anthony, who then presses the receiver to his ear. Bleeding, the New Yorker listens.

The grim fellow dons his ballistic mask and appraises the white cargo van, which is currently a still life. His gaze flickers to the dead, half-nude body of the redheaded captive and then to his partner.

Anthony clenches his jaw as he listens to the message from Denise. His eyes shine bitterly, and he shakes his head. Blood drains from his nostrils and runs down his chin.

The New Yorker lets the cellphone drop from his right hand. CLICKING, the device bounces upon concrete.

Saddened by the sight, Ridgeman kneels behind the sedan, removes his ballistic mask, and squeezes Anthony's shoulder.

RIDGEMAN
Sorry.

Pale and shaking, Anthony stares at the cellphone. His eyelids droop as he SUCKS air into his dying system. Pain shoots across his body.

ANTHONY
Wasn't...what I was hoping to hear.

The New Yorker SPITS a lump of gory mucus onto the cellphone and continues to stare at the device.

RIDGEMAN
Want me to break it?

Fading and weak, Anthony nods his head, 'yes.'

Ridgeman swings the butt of his gun at the cellphone. Metal SMACKS glass, and cracks run across the screen. Again, the grim fellow POUNDS the device with his pistol. Translucent chips arc into the air, fall, and CLICK upon the concrete.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
These goddamn things.

Fury boils within the teary-eyed demolisher as he swings a third blow, which CRACKS the device in half. Squarish chunks SKID across the concrete in two directions.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Good?

Ridgeman looks to the side, and his stomach sinks.

Anthony's eyes are closed. His chest falls as his body EXHALES a breath that might be his last.

Ridgeman waits for Anthony to inhale. Two slow seconds pass.

A metallic GROAN claims the attention of the grim fellow, who hastily lowers his ballistic mask, lifts his head, and looks at the enemy vehicle. The driver's door of the white cargo van is rising like a hatchway.

Ridgeman aims his semiautomatic at the moving panel. Sodium light glares in his eyes as a cannibalized hunk of stainless steel appears in the opening.

Squinting, the grim fellow squeezes his trigger. His muzzle BOOMS thrice. One shot CLACKS against an airless tire, and another WHISTLES high; the third bullet CLANKS upon the stainless steel plank, which then SMACKS against the hidden criminal. Shield and attacker drop back into the cargo van, and gravity SLAMS the door.

Ridgeman ducks behind the sedan and turns to Anthony, who is leaning sideways on the bloody concrete.

Stuffing down emotions and focusing on the conflict, the grim fellow opens the back door of his battered car. His arms raise his dead partner from the concrete.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Ridgeman slides Anthony onto the rear floor, SLAMS the door, and opens the front. Hastily, he sets the sniper rifle and gasoline cannister atop the passenger seat and climbs inside.

The grim fellow flings the gear into reverse and STOMPS the gas pedal. Dark smoke rises from SCREECHING tires and the GURGLING engine as the sedan withdraws further and further from the capsized cargo van and rolls toward the street.

Buckling up, the grim fellow eyes his enemy and applies the brakes. The car stops. One hundred and fifty feet of concrete lie between the two vehicles.

Ridgeman flings the gear into drive and presses the gas pedal. The GURGLING engine yields black smoke as the sedan rolls toward the back of the van at a speed of fifteen miles per hour. Through the frame that once held the windshield, the grim fellow points his semiautomatic.

Eighty feet lie between the rolling vehicle and the capsized one. The driver's door of the van opens upward.

Aiming at this target, the grim fellow squeezes his trigger as fast as possible. Gunpowder THUNDERS. The gray glove that grips the door bursts, and blood sprays on the window. Again and again, shots SMACK into the unbreakable glass and CLANK against the inner panel. Metal GROANS as bullets bend the door in the wrong direction.

The bleeding criminal drops from view and MOANS. Ridgeman ejects a clip, slots a fresh one, and hangs two tear gas grenades on his vest. Bent backwards and partially dislodged, the shot-up van door remains wide open.

The distance between the moving car and the capsized automobile diminishes to ten feet. A boot STOMPS the brakes, and tires SKID. Ridgeman lurches, and his belt SNAPS taut.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS STATION - SAME

The bumper of the gray sedan CLANKS against the cargo van's rear doors. This exit is now blocked.

Ridgeman unbuckles his seatbelt, seizes the gasoline canister, and climbs through the windshield frame onto the hood of his car. Ahead of him sits the van's upturned left side, which wears the teal 'Nationwide Security Services' logo. Beyond that lies the open doorway.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Inside the van, the Gray-Gloved Robber tries to raise a weapon without any functional hands while Dmetrovic presses his back to the wall and aims his machine gun at the bottom edge of the windshield.

The silenced muzzle flashes, and shots CLANK into the intersection where bulletproof glass locks into the frame. Gradually, the connection starts to weaken...

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - SAME

Bullets CLANK within the van. Training his semiautomatic on the point of egress, Ridgeman bites the pin from a tear gas grenade and throws the disbursement device. HISSING vapors pour from the spinning matte black cylinder, which CLANKS against the door and caroms into the van. Somebody COUGHS.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER (O.S.)
I'm surrendering.
(he COUGHS)
Taking your deal...

RIDGEMAN
Okay. Come on out, hands up.

Ridgeman watches the opening over the barrel of his gun. Two bloody stumps rise from the billowing tear gas. Following these limbs is the COUGHING head of the Gray-Gloved Robber.

GRAY-GLOVED ROBBER
I need medical-

The semiautomatic BOOMS twice. Both bullets SMACK the criminal's neck, and his head CLANKS against the metal plate. This dead threat drops from view.

Covering the vaporous doorway with the smoking gun, Ridgeman places the cannister of gasoline atop van.

A BOOMING gunshot CLANKS into the undercarriage.

Startled, the grim fellow looks around the gas station lot.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Get rid of that gas can, nigga.

Ridgeman looks with disbelief toward the central building. Upon the corner of the roof and above the 'Gas St_t_on' sign lies the prone figure of Henry Johns. Almost all of his body is hidden by a pile of tiles.

HENRY JOHNS
I ain't done all this to see you
burn up no money.

RIDGEMAN
Gold isn't flammable.

HENRY JOHNS
I don't want it melted. And there's
cash in there too.

Dmetrovic COUGHS within the van. Ridgeman eyes the driver's door at which he aims his weapon and then returns his attention to Henry Johns.

RIDGEMAN
You wanna come down and take care
of Dmetrovic yourself?

HENRY JOHNS

Nah, nigga, nah. You the professional--lookit all the good work you did here. Can execute naked women and everything.

RIDGEMAN

Prick.

Tear gas billows from the open door. At present, Ridgeman notices a thin wisp that rises from the embrasure, and a new tactic blossoms in his mind.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Kneeling in the van, Dmetrovic COUGHS, fans tear gas from his blue goggles, and sees the HISSING grenade. Not far from the disbursement device lies the tape cassette player.

Towards these tools and the Russian leader carries an idea...

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS STATION - SAME

The grim fellow quietly crawls onto the teal 'Nationwide Security Services' logo. Hurling skyward, the HISSING tear gas grenade flies through the open doorway, into the air, and CLANKS against the concrete.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE (O.S.)

(very loud)

Do not prioritize money over having
a heartbeat!

Startled, Ridgeman looks at the misty doorway, which is the source of this blasting voice. The embrasure CLANKS open, and a silenced muzzle juts outside. With an outstretched hand, the grim fellow pushes away the extruding cylinder as he jams his semiautomatic into the vaporous opening.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Dmetrovic fires his redirected machine gun into the sky, and Ridgeman sends BOOMING lightning through the slit. Bullets lance the Russian leader's bare scalp. Red criminal thoughts SPLATTER against stainless steel and SMACK the buttons of the tape player, which is reactivated.

DISTORTED PRERECORDED VOICE

(very loud)

Do you understand?

The semiautomatic BOOMS again, and the tape player EXPLODES.

RIDGEMAN

Quiet.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS STATION - SAME

The dead body THUDS against the windshield of the capsized automobile as Ridgeman takes an unsteady backwards step. Near the edge of the van, he teeters, shifts his weight, and eventually finds his balance.

A gun BOOMS upon the rooftop. This shot CRACKS the grim fellow's left foot, and he tumbles from the van. His body SMACKS the concrete, and his pistol SKIDS a few feet away.

Pained, Ridgeman rolls onto his stomach and drags himself toward the weapon. Gore dribbles from his wounded foot.

Upon the roof, Henry Johns's gun BOOMS twice more. One bullet SMACKS the concrete that lies between Ridgeman and the semiautomatic, and the other CLANKS against the fumbled weapon itself. Spinning, the gun SKIDS well out of reach.

HENRY JOHNS
The next bullet ain't a warnin'.

The grim fellow looks at the semiautomatic that now lies more than fifty feet from his grasp. Frustrated, he rolls onto his back and grips his shot foot.

The slim fellow hangs from the roof and drops to the ground, where his boots THUD against the concrete. Gun extended, he walks forward.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
That new windbreaker's real nice.
Makes you look svelte.

Perplexed by this comment, Ridgeman raises his head from the ground and eyes Henry Johns.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Much better than that blue one you
wore on the news when you stomped
that Mexican.

Understanding comes to the grim fellow.

RIDGEMAN
When'd you spot me?

HENRY JOHNS
When you drove by the bank. And
twice when you was followin' on the
parkway.

The slim man scans the vicinity and the environs.

RIDGEMAN
What do-

HENRY JOHNS
Take off that mask so I can thank
you face to face for wipin' out all
these cruel ass thugs.

Ridgeman removes his ballistic mask, under which lies a face that is red with pain. His eyes shine balefully at Henry Johns, who is now forty feet away.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
This what most cops do when they
get suspended? Go rob bank robbers?

The grim fellow removes his left boot from his shot foot and reaches for the chest strap of his ballistic vest.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Why you takin' that off?

RIDGEMAN
I need the strap to stop the
bleeding.

HENRY JOHNS
Aight.

Fifteen feet of concrete separate the two men when Henry Johns stops walking. His gun remains leveled. GRUNTING and pained, Ridgeman removes his vest and RIPS off its chest strap.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
I got some questions for you.
You tell me some bullshit, and I
send the video I made of you
killin' that white girl to the
news. I got a real good angle up
there-
(he points to the roof)
-like one of them helicopter shots
they do in fancy movies. Even got
you when you took off your mask.

The grim fellow GRUNTS as he pulls the strap around his foot.

RIDGEMAN
Ask.

HENRY JOHNS
What do the Bulwark PD know about-

Ridgeman throws the vest at Henry Johns's semiautomatic and uses his hands, left knee, and right foot to spring up. Gunpowder BOOMS as the grim fellow dives forward.

The bullet WHACKS the launched vest, which then SMACKS Ridgeman's left shoulder. Knocked askew but still moving forward, the injured fellow SLAMS into his adversary.

Both men fall. Henry Johns's skull SMACKS the pavement, and a thick white hand pins his right wrist to the ground. Again, the gun BOOMS. Powder blackens the concrete, and the bottom edge of the bullet SCRAPES a furrow.

On top of the slim criminal looms the grim fellow, who has a sixty pound weight advantage. A thick white hand grips a dark-skinned throat.

Henry Johns SLAMS his knee into Ridgeman's crotch. Nothing happens. A second sharp assault to the groin garners no better reaction.

The slim criminal GASPS as the grim fellow savagely chokes him. BOOMING, the pinned gun scorches another black flower upon the concrete.

A left fist SMACKS Ridgeman across the jaw, and a boot kicks his gunshot foot. A pained YELL bursts from his throat.

GRUNTING, Henry Johns shoves Ridgeman away.

The grim fellow throws himself forward and SLAMS his left shoulder onto his adversary's extended arm, an action that once more pins the cellophane-wrapped gun to the ground. BOOMING, the semiautomatic blackens concrete.

Ridgeman prostrates himself on the arm and POUNDS the gun with his left fist. This targeted blow impacts a button, which CLICKS. Ejected, the clip SKIDS across the concrete.

RIDGEMAN

One more shot, and that gun's a
paperweight.

The slim fellow kicks his adversary in the foot. YELLING, the grim man hammers his fist at an angle against the dark-skinned finger that is curled around the trigger. BOOMING, the semiautomatic fires its last remaining round.

HENRY JOHNS

Nigga.

RIDGEMAN

Likewise.

Ridgeman reaches out and claims the ejected clip. Lying on their backs, the two PANTING combatants turn their heads and look at each other.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)

Let's talk through this.

Suspicion fills the face of Henry Johns, who then SNORTS.

HENRY JOHNS

Make some words.

Ridgeman sits up and pockets the clip. Five feet away and holding the empty gun like a club, Henry Johns right himself.

RIDGEMAN
We should clean up this mess--
together--and split the gold.

Gears turn in the mind of the slim fellow, who stares
silently at his adversary.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
We can fight each other some more--
do this until we're both crippled
or dead--or we can both be rich.
(he shakes his head)
I'm not sure how this's a dilemma.

HENRY JOHNS
Trustin' a cop--one that's crooked
as fuck--is the dilemma.
(he shrugs)
The only thing absolute certain
'bout you is that you don't give a
shit 'bout any oath you swear to.

A lot of mixed feelings percolate inside of the grim fellow
upon hearing this remark. For a weighty moment he considers
what to say.

RIDGEMAN
My twelve year-old daughter was
attacked for the fifth time two
days ago, and my wife has multiple
sclerosis. Can't even walk half the
time without a cane.
(he gestures at the van)
I need this.

Henry Johns appraises the battered face of Ridgeman.
Bitterness, melancholy, and truth shine upon the grim visage.

HENRY JOHNS
Seventy thirty.

RIDGEMAN
Sixty forty.

HENRY JOHNS
Aight.

The grim fellow points at the garage door.

RIDGEMAN
There's a getaway car in there?

HENRY JOHNS
Detective is astute.

Ridgeman gestures to the gray wreck, which is smoking. Henry
Johns eyes the destroyed vehicle as he rises to his feet.

RIDGEMAN
We need to tow that to the lake.

HENRY JOHNS

Aight.

The slim fellow extends his right arm toward his grim associate, who then grips the proffered hand, GRUNTS, and rises unsteadily to his feet. For a moment, the two men appraise the wreckage.

RIDGEMAN

Let's unload the guns--together and slowly--so that there's no temptation for either one of us.

HENRY JOHNS

Aight.

Henry Johns looks at the distant, disembowelled body of Biscuit and feels a bitter pang.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)

What we do with our friends?
We can't leave 'em here...but we
can't go bringing them back neither
without exposin' ourselves.

Decided, Ridgeman nods his head.

RIDGEMAN

We bury them.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - 10:08 PM

The moon is up. Henry Johns stands between the two discarded padlocks and raises the garage door. Inside of the small edifice sits a white luxury sedan.

Ridgeman eyes this getaway car from his nearby vantage as he winds fabric around his shot foot and reaches for his perforated boot.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS ST_T_ON - 10:20 PM

Ten more minutes have passed. Moonlight shines upon Ridgeman, who limps as he drags Anthony by his arms across the concrete. The heels of the dead man's leather shoes SCRAPE the pavement, which is colored with gunpowder, tire tracks, and blood.

Henry Johns winces as he stuffs displaced organs inside of Biscuit. Wiping gore on the corpse's teal pants, the slim fellow exhales a tremulous breath. Sticky hands clutch limp arms and drag the stout fellow across the concrete.

Living men convey dead partners toward the open trunk of the white luxury sedan. Heavy burdens SCRAPE the pavement.

Dragging Anthony, Ridgeman eyes the blasted body of Cheryl. His empty stomach knots at the sight of the slain innocent.

RIDGEMAN
I'll bring her to the van.

Misgivings fill Henry Johns, who then shakes his head.

HENRY JOHNS
We didn't know they was gonna grab
no woman.

The grim fellow keeps his comments to himself.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Nobody was s'pposed get shot unless
he pulled a gun on us. That was the
deal.

The New Yorker's Italian shoes SCRAPE the concrete.

RIDGEMAN
Did you believe that or did you
just want to?

No answer comes from the slim criminal who dolorously pulls his dead friend to the open trunk.

EXT. FIRST GARAGE / GAS STATION - 10:23 PM

The narrow garage is dark, rusty, and stripped of all gear. Henry Johns SLAMS the trunk on two covered bodies and four unloaded firearms as Ridgeman hobbles to the passenger door, which he then opens. Keys JINGLE in the hand of the slim fellow as he joins his new associate in the car.

INT. WHITE LUXURY SEDAN - SAME

Sitting in the plush luxury sedan, Henry Johns shuts his door, slots the key, and turns his hand. The engine CHITTERS, dwindles, and CHITTERS again. Ridgeman raises a concerned eyebrow and looks at the dashboard. Eventually, the CHITTERING turns into a steady PURR. Flinging the gear into reverse, the slim fellow presses the gas pedal.

HENRY JOHNS
You wear a jock strap?

The darkness of the garage is replaced by glaring sodium light.

RIDGEMAN
Bulletproof.

Ridgeman opens the glove box, which is empty, and inspects the side panels and floor mats for hidden weapons.

HENRY JOHNS
Ain't no guns in here.

Henry Johns cuts the wheel, brakes, and flings the gear into drive. PURRING, the automobile veers toward the capsized van.

RIDGEMAN
There are a lot of firearms in that
van.

The slim fellow glances at his associate while the white luxury sedan rolls forward.

HENRY JOHNS
My word's good. We sixty forty.

RIDGEMAN
We go in at the same time.

HENRY JOHNS
However you want. It's all cotton
candy.

Henry Johns cuts the wheel and sidles near the cargo van.

RIDGEMAN
It's not gonna smell great in
there.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS STATION - SAME

The doors of the white luxury sedan open. At present, the associates emerge and stride toward the gray car.

Ridgeman climbs behind the wheel of his vehicle, steps on the brake, and shifts into neutral. Henry Johns presses his palms to the hood and leans his weight forward. Metal GROANS as the conjoined vehicles disengage.

The grim fellow brakes, pulls the latch that opens the trunk, and emerges.

HENRY JOHNS
Why'd you-

RIDGEMAN
Tow cables.

Ridgeman limps to the back of his car.

HENRY JOHNS
Wait.

The grim fellow pauses and waits for his new associate. Together, they walk to the open trunk.

Ridgeman reaches his hand into the tail, where lies a spare tire, a jack, an umbrella, some junk, and a set of neon yellow straps. This towing aid he grabs and raises from the trunk. Metal hooks JINGLE.

RIDGEMAN
We put the gold in here.

HENRY JOHNS
Why? This wreck is dead as a
insect.

RIDGEMAN
Right. But I gotta sit in it to
steer, and I don't want you cutting
me loose and driving off with
everything in your trunk.

HENRY JOHNS
You so paranoid suspicious, you
makin' me paranoid suspicious.

RIDGEMAN
I just want to avoid temptation.

HENRY JOHNS
Detective is a priest.

The two men return to the front of the car, where the grim
fellow fits the straps in place within the mashed grille
while the slim associate hooks the lines to the back of the
white luxury sedan.

Ridgeman and Henry Johns circumvent Cheryl (who was recently
dragged into position) and appraise each other at the rear of
the van.

RIDGEMAN
Let's go slow.

HENRY JOHNS
It's all cotton candy.

The grim fellow jerks the bottom (formerly right) door, which
CLANKS upon the concrete, and then raises the other panel.
Into this capsized vehicle creep the wary associates.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Smells like all these dudes shitted
themselves.

INT. WHITE CARGO VAN - SAME

Winching at the smell within the white cargo van, Ridgeman and
Henry Johns look at the bodies of Dmetrovic and the Robbers.
Machine guns lie near these soiled, bloody corpses, which
also wear holstered pistols. Leaning against the corrugated
left wall that was once the floor are the four duffel bags.
Bullet holes in the tilted undercarriage of the van have been
plugged up with five ounce bars of gold bullion.

RIDGEMAN
Stay away from the bodies.

HENRY JOHNS
On Father's Day, does your daughter
give you one or two salutes?

RIDGEMAN
She's respectful.
(he gestures)
Everything's in these duffels?

HENRY JOHNS
Yeah--'xcept for that stuff on the
wall.

Each man seizes the side grip of the uppermost duffel and heaves. The weighty collection of gold bullion SMACKS the top door, arcs into the sodium light, and CLANKS against concrete. Again, the duo seizes and tosses a duffel outside. Precious metals CLANK against the pavement. The third bag then CLANKS upon its siblings.

Ridgeman UNZIPS the fourth duffel, which contains ninety-eight five-ounce gold bars. To this collection, Henry Johns adds the ones that were lodged in the wall. The associates grab side handles and carry this last bag outside.

EXT. FRONT LOT / GAS STATION - SAME

Ridgeman and Henry Johns set the fourth duffel down, grab Cheryl by her pale limbs, and drag her inside of the capsized cargo van. The grim fellow looks one last time upon the dead bodies and SLAMS the horizontal doors.

At present, the associates carry the duffel bags to the gray wreck. Into its trunk, these valuable burdens are deposited. Gold CLANKS, and the suspension SQUEAKS.

Ridgeman shuts the trunk and enters his car as Henry Johns returns to the idling vehicle and toggles the gear from park to drive. PURRING, the white luxury sedan rolls forward. Nylon tow straps SNAP taut.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Ridgeman lurches in his seat as the leading car jerks the gray wreck forward. Thick fists adjust the steering wheel.

INT. WHITE LUXURY SEDAN - SAME

Henry Johns drives toward the street, brakes, and looks in both directions. The horizon is empty.

The slim fellow dials the wheel clockwise and turns west. Farther into the factory district he drives this getaway vehicle. A glance at the rearview mirror shows Ridgeman following in his tethered gray wreck.

Casually, Henry Johns lowers his left hand and reaches into his seat cushion. From a hidden slit he withdraws the third cellophane-wrapped semiautomatic.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Oblivious of any suspicious acts within the leading car, Ridgeman steers. Warehouses and factories move past either side of the towed automobile at a speed of twenty-five miles per hour. Wind blows through frames that once held glass, and for a very brief moment, the tense, continually grim fellow relaxes.

Four pairs of tires SMACK wooden planks that cover a hole in the road, and the weary man's brief reprieve ends.

Eyeing Henry Johns, Ridgeman pulls the housing off of the bottom of his steering wheel column. A snub-nosed revolver is affixed by duct tape to the underside of this cylinder.

INT. WHITE LUXURY SEDAN - TEN MINUTES LATER

Oblivious of any suspicious acts in the succeeding car, Henry Johns YAWNS, glances in the rearview mirror, and looks around. Dilapidated factories and warehouses are gradually replaced by vacant, weedy, ochre-colored lots.

The paved road turns into dirt, and the tires of the white luxury sedan RUMBLE across this uneven ground.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

Moonlit dust billows through the open windshield as Ridgeman and his gray wreck are pulled onto the gritty path. Tires RUMBLE, and his face gathers dirt.

The grim fellow observes his barren surroundings. On one side of the road lie two overturned, rusted automobile shells, and on the other loom dismantled machines that might have been printing presses. Dozens of corroded metal drums sit in the ochre-colored weeds.

Something glimmers with moonlight on the western horizon, and Ridgeman wipes grit off of his face and from his eyes so that he can better see this anomaly.

EXT. FILTHY LAKE / FACTORY DISTRICT - SAME

At the outskirts of the factory district and surrounded by dirt lies a man-made lake that is covered with ochre scum and floating garbage. The white luxury sedan tows the gray wreck toward this foul morass and stops at a distance of one hundred and fifty feet from its edge.

INT. WHITE LUXURY SEDAN - SAME

Leaning back in the plush driver's seat, Henry Johns eyes Ridgeman in the rearview mirror, pulls a handle, and exits.

INT. RIDGEMAN'S GRAY SEDAN - SAME

In the gray sedan, the grim fellow watches his slim associate, pops the trunk, and flings the door. His right hand grabs his registration from the glove box, which he then pockets.

EXT. FILTHY LAKE / FACTORY DISTRICT - SAME

Glaring overhead, the moon approaches its zenith. Both men squint in luminous dust.

HENRY JOHNS
I'll unhook these.

RIDGEMAN
I'll toss the duffels.

Henry Johns attends to the tow lines while Ridgeman limps to the back of the gray wreck and removes the first duffel bag. Heaved, this collection of bullion CLANKS in the dirt ten feet away from the car's right taillight.

Hooks JINGLE as the slim man unfastens nylon lines. Twenty feet away, a second duffel CLANKS on the ground.

Henry Johns joins Ridgeman at the back of the gray wreck and removes the third bag while the other fellow withdraws the fourth. Both duffels are heaved and CLANK upon the ground. Dust covers this weighty accumulation of precious metal.

Allowing himself a moment of affection, the grim fellow PATS his gray lady.

RIDGEMAN (CONT'D)
Sorry about this.

Henry Johns walks to the white luxury car, opens both passenger side doors, and strides alongside Ridgeman to the four dusty duffels. Each man claims and drags two bags across the dirt. Grit swirls behind the valuable burdens.

Henry Johns heaves the first duffel onto the backseat. Gold CLANKS on the soft leather bench, and a moment later, the second load lands with a loud CLANK. Ridgeman sets the third bag atop the others, adds the fourth, and shuts the door.

The slim fellow walks toward the driver's side while his grim associate gets into the passenger's seat.

INT. WHITE LUXURY SEDAN - SAME

Doors close, and Ridgeman settles. Henry Johns toggles the gear into drive, dials the wheel, and circles around until the front bumper is directly behind the rear of the gray wreck. Stirred dirt blows.

RIDGEMAN
Don't drive too close to that muck.

HENRY JOHNS
You sure you ain't a elementary
teacher? Used to dealin' with lil
kids who don't know nothin'?

RIDGEMAN
I believe you meant to say, "Who
don't know anything"?

Irked, the slim fellow glares at his associate.

HENRY JOHNS
You understood me, didn't you?

RIDGEMAN
Yeah, but you're smarter than you
sound. A whole lot smarter, from
what I've seen.

Henry Johns shrugs and returns his gaze to the gray wreck.

HENRY JOHNS
It's good to be underestimated.

Ridgeman wonders if there is a threatening insinuation in this remark. At present, he dismisses the thought and rolls down his window.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
You doin' that in case I confuse
this car with a submarine?

RIDGEMAN
Yep.

Frowning, the slim fellow steps on the accelerator. Bumper THUDS against bumper. Eight wheels turn as the rear vehicle pushes the gray wreck toward the lake.

Ridgeman looks at Henry Johns, who presses harder on the accelerator. At a speed of twenty-five miles per hour and rising, both cars roll toward the water. The expanding ochre morass looms sixty feet off.

Dirt colors the windshield. The distance to the water's edge shrinks to thirty feet. Ridgeman opens his mouth to object as Henry Johns STOMPS the gas pedal and cuts the wheel hard to the right.

EXT. FILTHY LAKE / FACTORY DISTRICT - SAME

The white luxury sedan SKIDS north while the wreck speeds forward and SPLASHES into the water. Bubbles, froth, and soggy debris inhale the gray sedan.

INT. WHITE LUXURY SEDAN - SAME

SCREECHING, the luxury vehicle jerks to a halt. Ridgeman jams his snub-nosed revolver into the neck of Henry Johns and shoves the gear from drive to park.

RIDGEMAN

Keep calm.

HENRY JOHNS

What the fuck is this shit?

RIDGEMAN

Just a precautionary measure: I don't intend to hurt you. Take out your cellphone.

Understanding comes quickly to the slim fellow.

HENRY JOHNS

That video's my insurance policy.

RIDGEMAN

Wrong. You can identify me if you get tossed in jail or brought to trial, and I can do the same to you in such situations. We keep each other quiet: That's fair, that's balanced.

(he shakes his head)

But that video you made opens me up to extortion--from you, from anybody you send it to, and from anybody who ever hacks into any of your hardware.

HENRY JOHNS

None of that's gonna happen. We sixty forty.

RIDGEMAN

I just wanna remove the temptation.

HENRY JOHNS

Get that gun off of my neck.

The grim fellow extends his thick left hand.

RIDGEMAN

Give me your phone and tell me the passcode.

Ridgeman presses the gun deeper into the neck of Henry Johns.

HENRY JOHNS
Get that fuckin' gun off of me.

RIDGEMAN
I don't want to do hurt you, but-

The slim fellow ducks under the gun, draws the cellophane-wrapped semiautomatic, and jams the muzzle into his adversary's chest. Gunpowder BOOMS. The driver's side window SHATTERS as two point-blank bullets CRACK the grim fellow's ribs and pierce his heart.

Ridgeman tries to fire a second shot, but Henry Johns elbows the weapon from his grasp. The smoking, snub-nosed revolver THUDS upon the floorwell.

Stunned, the dying man presses his hands to his blasted chest and gapes at his killer.

HENRY JOHNS
You fuckin' dumb ass.

The grim fellow looks down at his bloody hands.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
I wasn't gonna blackmail you: My word's good.

Henry Johns pockets the snub-nosed revolver, leans back in his seat, and looks at Ridgeman.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Shoulda trusted a nigga.

Upset, the slim fellow looks away from his dying adversary, whose shaking hands cannot damn the torrents of blood that run from his chest.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
All I ever did 'fore this was steal
some autos, peddle blow, and put
the fool who crippled my brother
into intensive. Ain't never killed
nobody.
(he shakes his head)
Damn.

Pale and losing consciousness, Ridgeman stuffs some oxygen into his lungs and eyes Henry Johns.

RIDGEMAN
Bury my friend. Please.
So he doesn't get caught up in all
this.

HENRY JOHNS
Aight.

RIDGEMAN
Thank you.

The dying man shuts his eyes.

Remorse weighs heavily upon the slim fellow.

HENRY JOHNS

You was bein' true honest when you
said that shit 'bout your baby girl
gettin' attacked? And your wife
with M.S.?

Straining to remain conscious, Ridgeman opens his eyes.

RIDGEMAN

I was being honest.

HENRY JOHNS

Aight. I give them somethin'--
anonymously, in the mail, after
this headline been replaced by a
celebrity divorce or another psycho
white kid who took a machine gun to
school.

The grim fellow can no longer keep his eyes open. With his
final reserve of strength, he opens his mouth.

RIDGEMAN

For...ty...per...cent.

HENRY JOHNS

They ain't gettin' forty, but I
take good care of 'em.

No response comes from Ridgeman, who weakly exhales his final
breath. Lifeless, his body bleeds.

Henry Johns reaches over and presses a button with the barrel
of his semiautomatic. There is a THUNK.

EXT. FILTHY LAKE / FACTORY DISTRICT - SAME

The trunk of the white luxury sedan opens.

EXT. SECLUDED WOODED AREA - 2 AM

Hours have passed. The moon is sinking and a small amount of
starlight reaches these secluded woods. Sweaty, stained with
dirt, and wearing Ridgeman's clothes, Henry Johns wrings the
handle of a shovel with his blistered hands. His dolorous
gaze focuses on one of the three graves that lie beyond his
begrimed boots.

HENRY JOHNS

Sorry to put you near these cops,
but I can't be finicky right now.

The slim fellow turns away from the burial site, takes two steps, and looks over his shoulder.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
After all this shit is finished
forgotten, I come back and bury you
right.

Titlecard: Eleven Months later...

INT. LIVING ROOM / OCEANSIDE APARTMENT - TWILIGHT

Dressed in a black silk shirt and tan linen pants, Henry Johns enters his west coast condominium, where vanilla-colored walls, white leather couches, and hanging crystal nicely compliment a gorgeous, oceanside view of the Pacific Ocean. Prone on a massage table is his mother Jennifer, whose back is being kneaded by a handsome, white male MASSAGE THERAPIST. The healthy, relaxed woman looks over at her son.

JENNIFER
Hey Henry. I can have Christopher
do this in the guest room if you'd-

HENRY JOHNS
No problem, ma. I know you like to
look out at the ocean when you get
massaged.

JENNIFER
Got some stuff in the mail while
you were gone. Looks like from your
broker.

HENRY JOHNS
Been up too many hours to look at
numbers right now. Ethan's home or
at Freddy's?

JENNIFER
He's in the game room.

HENRY JOHNS
Aight. You want sushi for dinner?

The Massage Therapist claims and lovingly attacks a new limb.

JENNIFER
I'll cook something homemade if you
want.

HENRY JOHNS
Thanks. I would enjoy your cookin'.

INT. GAME ROOM / OCEANSIDE APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

EXPLOSIONS echo as Henry Johns enters the game room. Upon the five foot screen of a 4K television set, zooming space ships dogfight one another in the interstellar vacuum. Big speakers RUMBLE in every corner, and in the middle of the floor on a plush couch sits Ethan, who currently fiddles with an amazingly complicated game controller. Upon his wheelchair stands a two liter bottle of ginger ale.

HENRY JOHNS
That game's good?

Surprised, Ethan fingers a button. A BLIP sounds, and the word 'Pause' flashes upon the screen. The thirteen year-old faces his brother.

ETHAN
You're done with everything?

YAWNING, the slim fellow nods his head.

HENRY JOHNS
Finally.

INT. LIVING & DINING ROOM / APARTMENT 435 - LATE DAY

A key ring JINGLES, and two bolts SNAP. Into the small Bulwark City apartment walks Ridgeman's thirteen year-old daughter, Sara, who wears a raggedy jacket and holds an unopened package that is the size of a shoebox. Sitting on the brown sofa and wearing a coffee-stained robe is Melanie, who looks like she has aged ten years during the intervening eleven months.

MELANIE
Hi sweetie.

SARA
There was a package downstairs! I think it's-

MELANIE
Close the door, please.

The girl closes the door, SNAPS the bolts, and turns around.

SARA
I think it's from Dad!

Sadness shines in the eyes of the retired police officer, who is far less hopeful about the fate of her missing husband.

MELANIE
What does the return address say?

SARA
It says Ridgeman and a P.O. Box.

Uneasy with this information, Melanie motions to Sara.

MELANIE

Let me have it please.

The girl excitedly bounds toward her mother, who then claims the package and grimaces.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

This's heavy.

SARA

I can open it for you.

Uncomfortable with this mystery, Melanie shakes her head.

MELANIE

It's addressed to me, and I want to open it myself. In private.

SARA

Mom. I wanna-

MELANIE

Sara. Please.

SARA

Okay.

MELANIE

I wasn't able to cook today, so I ordered Chinese.

SARA

Okay.

MELANIE

Kiss.

The girl kisses her mother on the cheek, withdraws to her bedroom, and shuts the door.

Melanie sets the box upon the adjacent sofa cushion, takes a letter opener from the coffee table, and slices the packing tape. With trembling hands, she pulls back the flaps. Lying underneath layers of bubble wrap is a glimmering gold mass.

Tears fill the woman's eyes as she silently mouths the words 'Thank you' to her deceased husband.

INT. GAME ROOM / PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - EVENING

Spaceships EXPLODE in front of Henry Johns, who sits next to his brother Ethan in the game room of their oceanside apartment. Both of them now have amazingly complicated controllers in their hands.

HENRY JOHNS
Pause this.

A BLIP sounds, and the word 'Pause' flashes upon the screen.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
When I was mailin' out that
package, I started thinkin' 'bout
that game we played right before
everythin' changed for us--the one
in the jungle. You still got it?

ETHAN
It's right there on the end-
(he points)
The red one.

Henry Johns walks over and claims the indicated box.

HENRY JOHNS
You saved our adventure? Where we
was before?

ETHAN
Yeah. We can continue from the
exact same place.

HENRY JOHNS
Good.

The slim fellow exchanges discs, sits beside his brother, and
reclaims his amazingly complicated controller.

ETHAN
Ready?

HENRY JOHNS
Yeah.

Henry Johns looks up at the screen.

HENRY JOHNS (CONT'D)
Let's hunt some lions.

CUT TO BLACK

The End.